



**MILESTONES
IN THE HISTORY
OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY**

by **ALEX BITTELMAN** 10c

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Communist
Party

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Prefatory Note

THE PRESENT publication is a reprint of my pamphlet *Fifteen Years of the Communist Party* which appeared in 1934. Added is a brief historical survey on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of our Party.

The reader should bear in mind that the series of articles appearing here were written at various times in connection with specific phases of our Party's growth, and that they constitute, therefore, a part of the development of our Party. As such, these articles present historical material which we felt should be republished as an aid to the study and understanding of the history of our Party.

ALEX BITTELMAN

August, 1937

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The Vanguard Role of the Communist Party*

A BRIEF HISTORIC SURVEY ON THE OCCASION
OF THE EIGHTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

IN CELEBRATING the eighteenth anniversary of the Communist Party, it is our task to bring to life our Party's history: its origin, its struggles for the working class and for the people, its setbacks and achievements. We should make the membership of the Party, and the widest circles of our people, conscious of the fact that our Party stems from the first Marxian groups in this country, which played such an important role in the birth and organization of the American labor movement, that we stem from the groups of the First International of Marx and Engels, which inscribed a glorious page in the struggle against slavery and for democracy that was led by Abraham Lincoln.

We should make the people conscious of the fact that in our Party are embodied the best revolutionary and democratic traditions of the country, of the working class.

And as we come nearer to our own day, to the time when

* Reprinted from *The Communist*, August and September, 1937.

the Communist Party was formally organized, we find that the birth of our Party as an independent political organization was made possible by the infusion of Leninism into the experience of the progressive labor movement of America. These experiences plus Leninism gave us the basis for the Communist Party. The Communist International, and its model party—the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—headed by Comrade Stalin, gave us the guidance that helped the American Communists to find the way to the masses and to the position of vanguard.

Through the eighteen years of its existence, our Party has passed through several periods, the same as the world in which we live and struggle. These periods have to be studied and lessons drawn for our work today. But through all these periods and changes, our Party has always been a loyal and devoted section of our class—the working class; its self-sacrificing advanced detachment in the struggle for a better life. Mistakes we have made; but we have never been ashamed to admit them and correct them openly and with the help of our class. That is why, in part, our Party was able to function as the advance guard, to fight most consistently for the task of the day and to point the road forward to the struggle of tomorrow. That is why so many of our slogans of agitation of yesterday have now become the slogans of action of great mass movements of the working class and its allies. That is how our Party has reached its present advanced position in the labor movement and in the developing People's Front.

This we should make the masses conscious of by spreading widely the writings of our leaders, Browder and Foster, where the history of our Party comes to life and helps build the future.

From such a study of our history, the masses will also learn how our struggle against Right opportunism (Lovestonism, which is becoming less and less distinguishable from Trotskyism) and against Trotskyism, now degenerated into fascist banditism, has helped us to become stronger, more able to resist bourgeois influences, more effective fighters as the vanguard of our class. And especially our Party membership will learn how persistence in deviations from Leninism, from the Bolshevik line of the Party, invariably leads to degeneration and to the camp of the enemy.

Let us prepare properly for the fulfilment of these tasks on the eighteenth anniversary of our Party. And let us make this an occasion for heightening the work of Party building: recruiting, *Daily Worker* circulation, improvement of all phases of our work, and deeper training in the theory of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

Let the eighteenth anniversary become a milestone in the realization of our great tasks as formulated in the decisions of the June meeting of the Central Committee.

It does not require much investigation for us to see that never in the history of the Party was the situation so favorable as it is today for the Communist Party to function successfully as the vanguard of the working class. And for the following reasons: the working class is in motion. It is organizing economically and politically. It has come into life as a class, becoming a leading political factor in the country and reaching out for correct relations with its allies among the farmers, city middle classes and Negroes.

And where does our Party find itself in relation to these big progressive movements of the working class and of the people? Not outside but inside, in the very thick of

them; not as observers but as active participants; not in conflict with these movements but as close collaborators. Clearly, this is a most favorable position from which to build the Party as the true vanguard of the working class. Never as yet has our Party found itself in such a favorable position.

This, of course, did not come about automatically. Given the objective conditions which characterize the present situation, nationally and internationally, it was our correct line and the struggle for it among the masses that placed our Party in this position. It was our correct struggle for the unity of the working class and for the People's Front that brought the Party to this advanced position.

Is it true, then, or is it not true, that the present position of our Party in the mass movements of the working class and its allies is most favorable for the fulfilment of our historic role as the vanguard, for the building up of our Party as the true advanced detachment of the American working class? It is absolutely true. The whole previous history of our Party has prepared us for that. I refer especially to the following: our constant devotion and loyalty to the class interests of the workers and their allies; our self-sacrificing struggles in defense of these interests; loyalty to our revolutionary principles; to the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under all and every circumstance; our pioneering work in all fields of working class organization and struggle; similar historic pioneering activities among the Negroes, farmers, women and youth; our struggle against opportunism and sectarianism in our own midst; our readiness to admit errors and to correct them publicly and with the help of our class; our devotion and loyalty

to our Party and to the Communist International—to its principles, discipline and leadership—all these vital achievements and experiences in the history of our Party which we placed at the service of the line of the Seventh World Congress, for the struggle for the united and People's Front, have helped to bring about the present forward march of labor as well as to place our Party in the present favorable position in the mass movements.

Favorable in what sense? In the sense of being able to render *greater* service to our class and to our people in the struggle against their exploiters; in the sense of being a *more* effective force in the struggle for the unity of the working class and for the People's Front against reaction, fascism and war; in the sense of being able to help *the whole class* and its allies to proceed from lower to higher stages of struggle and to the socialist revolution; in the sense, in short, of building up our Party as the true revolutionary vanguard of the working class.

How does the Party build itself as the vanguard of the working class? Comrade Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism** gives us the answer to the question. He says: "The Party must absorb all the best elements of the working class, their experience, their revolutionary spirit and their unbounded devotion to the cause of the proletariat." (p. 38.)

That means, first, *recruiting*. Without day by day recruiting by which we seek to absorb into our midst "all the best elements of the working class," our Party cannot become the vanguard. He who talks about the Party being the vanguard but does not exert himself to stimulate and help

* *Foundations of Leninism*, by Joseph Stalin. New York, International Publishers. 10 cents.

recruiting is merely a phrasemonger and a chatterer.

That means, second, to cultivate and enrich the experience, the revolutionary spirit and proletarian devotion of the new members. The Party builds itself as the vanguard of the class only by absorbing continually the experience, the revolutionary spirit and proletarian devotion of the new members which it recruits. We continually seek new members because we want more of this experience, spirit and devotion. New members have a good deal to contribute to the building of the Party as the vanguard, that is, when we recruit the best elements of the working class. Therefore, we must create for the new members the most favorable conditions to transmit to the Party their experience, their revolutionary spirit, and to demonstrate their proletarian devotion. And *on this basis* we undertake to transmit to them our experience, our principles, our theory.

In other words, recruiting (without which there is no building of the Party as the vanguard) is not a mere formal act of bring in a new member but is a process of absorbing his experiences and revolutionary spirit, thus enriching the Party's own experience and revolutionary spirit, and, at the same time, of enabling the new member to absorb the Party's experience, its traditions, its theory, principles and organizational practices.

This is the most fundamental way of building the Party as the vanguard of the working class, that is, by absorbing *continually* all its best elements, their experience, revolutionary spirit and proletarian devotion.

Are the circumstances today more favorable or less for such work? More favorable, of course. Why? Because the best elements of the working class are coming forward now by the thousands in all the big mass movements (which

was not the case when the working class was not as actively in motion as today), you can literally point these people out with your finger; because, being in the midst of these mass movements and in the front lines, we are daily rubbing shoulders with these people, associating with them, working with them in all fields, gaining their confidence; and because, finally, the prestige of Communism and of the Communist Party is growing day by day.

Hence the conditions are most favorable for recruiting the best elements of the working class and thus building the Party as the vanguard.

How do we fulfil the role of vanguard? Comrade Stalin formulates two fundamental Leninist principles governing this question. I shall quote them.

"1. The Party must be armed with a revolutionary theory, with a knowledge of the laws of the movement, with a knowledge of the laws of revolution. Without this it will be impotent to guide the struggle of the proletariat and to lead the proletariat. The Party cannot be a real Party if it limits itself to registering what the masses of the working class think or experience, if it drags along at the tail of the spontaneous movement, if it does not know how to overcome the inertness and the political indifference of the spontaneous movement, or if it cannot rise above the transient interests of the proletariat, if it cannot raise the masses to the level of the class interests of the proletariat." (*Ibid.*)

Stated even more concisely:

"The Party must take its stand at the head of the working class, it must see ahead of the working class, lead the proletariat and not trail behind the spontaneous movement." (*Ibid.*)

"2. It must at the same time be a unit of the class, be part of that class, intimately bound to it with every fiber of its being. The distinction between the vanguard and the main body of the

working class, between Party members and non-Party workers, will continue as long as classes exist, as long as the proletariat continues to replenish its ranks with newcomers from other classes, as long as the working class as a whole lacks the opportunity of raising itself to the level of the vanguard. But the Party would cease to be a party if this distinction were widened into a rupture; if it were to isolate itself and break away from the non-Party masses. The Party cannot lead the class if it is not connected with the non-Party masses, if there is no close union between the Party and the non-Party masses, if these masses do not accept its leadership, if the Party does not enjoy moral and political authority among the masses." (*Ibid.*)

There is nothing to add to these principles. They have stood the test of time and have proven invulnerable.

What has to be discussed at vital turns in the class struggle is the *concrete ways* in which these principles can find their best and most effective expression. These concrete ways are not always the same. They depend upon many factors, among them the maturity of the class struggle, the relation of class forces, the degree of "moral and political authority" which the Party enjoys among the masses, etc. Taking this into consideration, the Seventh World Congress defined these concrete ways of realizing the vanguard role of the Party as follows:

"The Congress emphasizes with particular stress that only *the further all-round consolidation of the Communist Parties themselves*, the development of their initiative, the carrying out of a policy based upon Marxian-Leninist principles, and the application of correct flexible tactics, which take into account the concrete situation and the alignment of class forces, can ensure the mobilization of the widest masses of toilers for the united struggle against fascism, against capitalism." (p. 36.) *

* *Resolutions, Seventh Congress of the Communist International*, New York, Workers Library Publishers. 10 cents.

Let me draw your attention to the essentials of this very important statement on the concrete ways of building the vanguard *in the present period*.

(a) Party initiative; (b) policies based on Marxist-Leninist principles; (c) correct flexible tactics, *taking into account the concrete situation and alignment of class forces*; (d) the aim being the mobilization of *the widest masses* of toilers for the united struggle against fascism, against capitalism.

This is our guide. First comes Party initiative. This is fundamental. Without it, there can be no building of the revolutionary vanguard, there can be no mass mobilization of the widest scope for the fight against fascism and capitalism. This means that we continually have to discover the best policies for the mobilization of the masses for this struggle and to bring these policies to the mass movements and to win them for these policies. This is the duty of every Party organization and of the Party as a whole.

Second, we must initiate *correct* policies. Initiative is good provided it produces good policy and good policy is one that mobilizes the widest masses of toilers for united struggle against reaction, fascism and capitalism. To be so, policy has to be based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

Third, good policy brought to the masses by Party initiative is good for the masses and good for the vanguard. Yet this alone is not enough. Just as good initiative can be ruined by bad policy, so good policy can be ruined by bad tactics. To prevent this, we need correct flexible tactics. This, however, is not and cannot be given once and for all because correct flexible tactics must take into account "the concrete situation and alignment of class forces." These, as we know, vary and change and hence

tactics must vary and change. It is therefore incumbent upon every Communist and Party organization to be constantly alive to the problem of "correct flexible tactics" because this is just as decisive as timely initiative and good policy. In fact, when these two are given, correct flexible tactics will decide everything. And remember, to be correct and flexible, tactics must take account of the *concrete* situation and of the alignment of class forces.

Compare, for example, some of our policies and tactics prior to the Seventh World Congress and subsequently. During the years prior to the Seventh Congress, we fulfilled our role as vanguard by propagating the final aims of our Party, by pointing out the next steps in the daily mass struggle for partial demands and by independently organizing masses of toilers to fight for these demands; independently, that is, from those mass organizations of the workers and other toilers in which the reformists were successful in preventing the workers from struggling and in expelling the militant forces from the organization. We fought for the united front all through these years but because the objective conditions were not as favorable, because of our sectarian habits and practices, and because of the splitting tactics of the reformist leaders, we were making relatively little headway in bringing about the united front. But we couldn't, because of that, give up the fight and capitulate to capitalism as the reformists did. This we never will do. We will always defend the interests of the masses against their exploiters, regardless of the forms and methods which conditions may dictate. We were forced to lead minority movements and minority struggles.

Thus, in the former period, we resorted as a rule to the tactic of organizing mass struggles independently, of lead-

ing them largely ourselves and of raising the movements from lower to higher levels at a comparatively fast tempo.

On the whole, barring the sectarian and Right opportunist errors which distorted this line and militated against its greater success, this was a correct tactic. It laid the groundwork in part for the present advance of the mass movements. It helped prepare many of its cadres. It popularized many of our slogans which in the past were either slogans of agitation or demands of minority movements and struggles but which are today slogans of action of large mass movements (unemployment relief, organize the unorganized into industrial unions, trade union unity, Negro rights, farmer demands, youth demands, independent working class political action, alliance with farmers and middle classes, etc.). It served as a check upon the capitalist offensive in many crucial instances and also as a check upon the extent and scope to which reactionary reformists were able to betray the masses. It actually succeeded directly and indirectly in securing important concessions for the masses from the exploiters. It—this tactic of independent leadership—strengthened our Party and prepared us for the vanguard role in the present period.

Those who would negate in our past not only the sectarian and Right opportunist errors but also our struggles against these errors, and with that would cancel our achievements in helping to bring about the birth of the American working class as a class—the propaganda of revolutionary Socialism and the leadership of minority movements and struggles—those who would knowingly want to do that are in danger of ceasing to be good Communists nor would they be dependable fighters for the vanguard role of our Party in the present situation.

What is the situation today? The working class is moving. The masses are moving. The unity of the working class and the People's Front is being cemented in the heat of major economic and political struggles. The objective conditions and our past struggles are moving the masses forward. And we are in the very midst of it all. Where thousands would rally around our slogans in the past, hundreds of thousands are doing it today. From this certain important tactical changes had to follow. We are now in a position to place before ourselves tasks of major magnitude in the struggle for the united front and for the People's Front. Instead of being forced to lead independently minority movements and struggles, we are getting into a position of collaborating with big progressive majority movements of the working class and its allies, of actively participating in these movements and establishing ourselves as a vanguard of the class. For the first time in the history of the United States, the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat—the Communists—is able to begin to function within the class and its mass movements in the way in which *The Communist Manifesto* envisaged it. Namely:

"They have no interests apart from those of the working class as a whole. . . . The Communists are practically the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; and theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."* (P. 22.)

This is the way in which we have begun to function and

* *The Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. New York, International Publishers, 5 cents.

to build ourselves as the vanguard of our class. The present way differs in many essential respects from the old way. And necessarily so. As a rule we seek to fulfil our function as vanguard within and in the front lines of the mass movements of our class and its allies, in line with the policy of the united and People's Front, instead of being forced (as in the past) ourselves to lead minority movements and struggles. This is clearly more advantageous to the class as well as to ourselves as its vanguard. It is more advantageous for the needs of the day as well as for the ultimate socialist liberation.

At first glance it might appear as though the tempo of transition from lower to higher stages of class struggle must necessarily be slowed down because of the new relationship between the revolutionary vanguard and the mass movements. This is not absolutely so. The tempo of transition need not necessarily be slowed down if the relationship of class forces continues, nationally and internationally, in a direction favorable to our camp. But even if, at one point or another, this tempo of transition from lower to higher stages of struggle should have to slow down as compared with past years, this would be only *relative*; because in compensation for that we would have the decisive fact that the transition when made would be made not only by ourselves and minority movements led by us but by great mass movements, *by the class*. In other words, not only minorities would be marching forward but the decisive sections of our class and its allies. In the past we could dream of that, propagate the idea and unfold the perspective; today it has become a practical task and a practical possibility.

Does it follow from that that in the present situation,

with the new relationship between the vanguard and the mass movements of the class, a relationship stressed so well by Comrade Dimitroff in his May Day statement, the Communists should permit themselves to become dissolved in the mass movements, should cease to function within them as Communists and Marxists, should cease building the Communist Party? Does it follow that the Communist Party and its organizations have no independent activities to carry on aside from the activities of Communists as participants of the mass movements? Of course not. Such conclusions have nothing in common with Communism. Recall once more the two principles of Stalin governing the role of the vanguard. *With the class and at the head of it.* The June meeting of the Central Committee has concretized these principles fully in application to the present situation. It warned against the danger of dissolution and indicated the ways of guarding against it. The Plenum resolution puts it to us:

"Working on the basis of this democratic People's Front platform, the Communist Party should in no way lose its identity or slacken in the task of strengthening its role as the most advanced and revolutionary section of the People's Front movement. This means that, in the midst of these mass movements, the Communist Party membership and organizations must:

- "(a) Build the Communist Party into a mass Party;
- "(b) Carry on mass propaganda for its final aims of working class power and socialism;
- "(c) As the vanguard of the mass movement, point out the next steps of the struggle, initiating and supporting the progressive demands of the movement."

In broad outline, Comrade Dimitroff elucidates the same task as follows:

"When we carry on a resolute struggle for the defense of democratic rights and liberties, against reaction and fascism, we do so as Marxists, as consistent proletarian revolutionaries and not as bourgeois democrats or reformists. Where we come forward in defense of the national interests of our own people, in defense of their independence and liberty, we do not become nationalists or bourgeois patriots; we do so as proletarian revolutionaries and true sons of our people. When we come forward in defense of religious freedom, against the fascist persecution of believers, we do not retreat from our Marxian outlook, which is free of all religious superstitions."

Thus we have the correct answer to the task of building our Party as the true vanguard of the working class in the struggle for the united front and People's Front, for the struggle against reaction, fascism and capitalism.

Fifteen Years of the Communist Party

SEPTEMBER, 1934, marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Communist Party of the United States.

Nineteen hundred and nineteen was the year when our Party was formed. It was a year of great mass strikes and deep revolutionary fermentation among the widest masses of the toiling population of the United States. The American working class was beginning to wake up to the swindle of the first world imperialist war, to the gigantic crimes of the capitalists and to their social-fascist supporters in the labor movement. The demobilization and peace reconstruction plans of the American bourgeoisie, which aimed at a widespread lowering of the standard of living of the toiling masses, were met with militant strikes in almost all the basic industries of the country. It was also the year of the great Seattle General Strike.

Nineteen hundred and nineteen was the year when the Communist International was formed, preceding the formation of our Party by about five months. Our Party became part of it. This followed logically and inevitably from the whole situation in the United States. All the lessons of the American class struggle dictated this step. But it was only through the costly experiences of the first world war, and especially the victory of the proletarian revolution in

Russia under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, that the proletarian vanguard of the United States came to realize that the Bolshevik way is the only way for the liberation of the American proletariat and all the exploited and oppressed. Thus it came to pass that our Party came into existence in the period of the first cycle of war and revolution.

On the "theory" that American Communism is a "foreign importation," the ruling class of the United States undertook to uproot the young Communist Party by the method of police raids and deportations of so-called aliens. We refer to the infamous days of Wilson-Palmer in 1919-1920.

History has already pronounced conclusive judgment upon this bourgeois and social-fascist "theory" of the foreign origin of American Communism. The judgment is contained in the present anniversary which marks *15 years of American Communism*. The fact that 15 years after the first anti-Communist mass persecutions the American bourgeoisie is again initiating similar measures as part of the intensified fascization of its rule is the best proof of the American character of the Communist Party of the United States.

From the date of the birth of the Communist Party of the United States to its fifteenth anniversary the world has passed through the first cycle of wars and revolutions, then the period of the relative stabilization of capitalism, and now finds itself confronted with a new cycle of wars and revolutions. For our Party it meant first a long and difficult period of formation and unification, then the establishment of contacts with the masses and their daily struggles along with the mastery of the program and tactics and organiza-

tional principles of Bolshevism, and finally the independent leadership of mass struggles of the workers, toiling farmers, Negroes, etc.

At the present time, which is characterized by deep-going shifts in the ranks of the working class and a sharp turn to higher forms of mass action (sympathy strikes, general strikes), the revolutionary activity of the Communist Party is growing, the influence of its slogans is increasing, its contacts with the masses are multiplying and becoming more firm, and its ranks are becoming more numerous. The factional struggle, which plagued the Party for many years, has become a thing of the past. With the expulsion of the Lovestone group from the Party and the liquidation of the Trotsky group, carried through in the latter part of 1929 under the leadership of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and of Comrade Stalin, the Communist Party of the United States became consolidated and was thus enabled to take up in earnest the task of mass revolutionary work dictated by the present period.

From the end of 1929, the struggle of the Communist Party of the United States for establishing firm contacts with the workers in the decisive factories of the basic industries, the unfolding of the program of concentration, began to take place, though unevenly, with ever-increasing effectiveness. The Open Letter of the Extraordinary Party Conference (July, 1933), marks a milestone on the road of this development.

It is no accident that the fifteenth anniversary of our Party will be celebrated in a heightened revolutionary atmosphere generated by the great General Strike in San Francisco which was of the nature of a historic vanguard battle

in the developing revolutionary counter-offensive of the American proletariat. There are more San Franciscos to come with higher revolutionary consciousness among the masses and wider Communist leadership. Following out the analysis of the Thirteenth Plenum of the Comintern Executive in application to the conditions in the United States, the Eighth Convention of our Party had foreseen and foretold the maturing of decisive class battles. Furthermore, by developing and concretizing the Open Letter, the Eighth Convention equipped the Party organization and membership with the practical directives for daily mass revolutionary work. It was the application of these directives of the Open Letter and of the Eighth Party Convention that enabled the Communist Party to give effective leadership to the masses in the maritime strike of the West Coast and in the General Strike of San Francisco. These battles will mark a decisive advance in the struggle against capitalism and in the growth of the Party, if we utilize the experiences of these battles in a Bolshevik way.

The present pamphlet is made up of a number of articles previously published in *The Communist*. They are offered as an introduction to the study of Party history but not as the history itself. As an outline of the main paths of the Party's development, its organic and inevitable rise, and the influences of international Bolshevism—Lenin and Stalin—in the shaping of a revolutionary proletarian ideology in the United States, these articles seek to arouse in the reader a desire for further study of the growth and development of American Communism. Such a study is of the highest importance for our Party membership, and for all class-conscious workers. There is a world to learn from the experiences of the past, and many an error can be avoided in

the present and the future through a critical evaluation of the history of our Party. In the history of our Party there is embodied the revolutionary experience of the American proletariat during a fateful fifteen years in the history of the United States and of the whole world.

August, 1934.

From Left Socialism to Communism*

THE formative period in the history of our Party appears as a development from Left Socialism to Communism. The essence of this development consisted in this, that the Left wing of the Socialist Party (1918-1919) was gradually freeing itself from vacillation between reformism and ultra-Left radicalism by means of an ever closer approach to the positions of Marxism-Leninism.

The Left wing of 1918, the organizer of our Party, was very definitely opposed to the reformist leaders of the Socialist Party and of the American Federation of Labor and was consciously organizing for a complete organizational break with the opportunists in the Socialist movement. Furthermore, the Left wing of 1918, unlike the previous Left currents in the American labor movement, took issue with the reformists on *all* the basic problems of the class struggle of the present epoch, chief of which was the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And in this the Left wing of 1918 was consciously following—or, rather, was trying to follow—the lead of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. It is this central fact that determines the historic role of the

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Left wing of 1918 as the bridge for the class conscious workers of the United States from vague Left Socialism and general proletarian militancy to the definite and solid foundations of Leninism.

However, when it came to the concrete application of the fundamental principles of Leninism to the class struggle as it developed from day to day, the Left wing manifested great vacillations between reformism and ultra-Left radicalism. Also there was a strong current of sectarianism running through its policies and tactics. These weaknesses of the Left wing were somewhat similar to the weaknesses of the first Marxian groups in the United States. Of these latter, Engels wrote in 1886 that they "have not been able to use their theory as a lever to set the American masses in motion. To a great extent they do not understand the theory themselves and treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic fashion as if it were something which must be committed to memory and which then suffices for all purposes without further ado. For them it is a credo, not a guide for action." It must be added, however, that the Left wing of 1918, having arisen in the epoch of the general crisis of world capitalism and of the proletarian revolution, was bound to outlive its weaknesses much sooner and to find its way to the American masses much more easily than had been the case with the first Marxian groups.

From the foregoing it will not be correct to assume that the only element that went into the making of the Communist Party of the United States was the Left wing of the Socialist Party. As a matter of fact, there were many more Left and militant elements, such as came from the Socialist Labor Party, the American Federation of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World, etc. Generally, therefore, our

Party springs from the Left and militant elements in the labor movement as a whole. Moreover, in the period that followed the organization of our Party in 1919, it was through the Left wing in the trade unions, headed by Foster, that the Communist movement began to derive its main strength and influence. But in the formative period (1918-1919), the basic Left group which organized our Party was the Left wing of the Socialist Party, the outstanding representative of which was Ruthenberg.

THE ISSUES OF STRUGGLE

The social-fascist historians of the American labor movement (James Oneal & Co.) maintain that the issue between the official leaders of the Socialist Party and the Left wing of 1918 was Socialism versus Anarchism. Nothing is further from the truth. As we shall see, the central issue was the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, revolutionary Marxian Socialism, versus reformism. And only hopeless philistines and outright flunkys of capitalist rule can confuse the adherents of the dictatorship of the proletariat with Anarchism. Oneal's method of "proving" this point is quite simple. He takes all the elements in the American labor movement of the past who advocated militant methods of struggle and direct mass action and dubs them Anarchists; then he discovers that the Left wing of 1918 also advocated militant class struggle and mass action; hence, the Left wing derives from Anarchism.

It is not the purpose of this article to trace the development of the Communist movement in the United States back to the labor movement of the pre-imperialist era. But that much can be seen without much argument, that the struggle between Marxism and Anarchism (Bakunin & Co.)

in the United States during the period of the First International was not a struggle between the opponents of "force" in the class struggle and its adherents, as Oneal tries to make it out. Marx and Engels were no pacifists, and their struggle against Anarchism was not because of its "violence" but because it represented the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie and not of the working class. The historic mass struggles and street battles of the American proletariat in 1877, which the present-day social-fascist bemoans as an unfortunate episode that seemed to strengthen the "force tendencies" in the labor movement, Marx *greeted* as the "first explosion against the associated oligarchy of capital which has arisen since the Civil War." And while he foresaw that the movement would be suppressed, Marx pointed out that it "can very well form *the point of origin* of an earnest workers' party." (*Letter to Engels*, July 25, 1877.)

The Communist movement of the United States is undoubtedly absorbing and assimilating all the militant and revolutionary traditions of the American working class. Following in the footsteps of Lenin, who restored the revolutionary essence of Marxism, developing it further in the era of imperialism, the American Communists unquestionably seek to revive these traditions, raising them to the present higher stage of preparation for the struggle for power. But it is just as unquestionable that the social-fascists of today are the direct descendants of those petty-bourgeois elements who, throughout the history of the American labor movement in the imperialist era, had tried to keep the working class chained to the chariot of the capitalist class, hampering and retarding its growth into an independent political force.

From its very inception the Left wing of 1918 was con-

scious of the fact that its differences with the official leadership (Right wing and Centrist) were of a fundamental character. "Many see in this internal dissension merely an unimportant difference of opinion or, at most, dissatisfaction with the control of the party and the desire to replace those who have misused it with better men. We, however, maintain that there is a fundamental distinction in views concerning party policies and tactics. And we believe that this difference is so vast that from our standpoint a radical change in party policies and tactics is necessary." (From the *Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing Socialist Party, Local Greater New York.*)

In accord with this conception, the Left wing brought to the forefront the basic question of the present epoch—the question of the attitude of the proletariat to the capitalist state and the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Left wing maintained that official Socialism ("dominant moderate Socialism") "accepted the bourgeois state" and "strengthened that state"; the Socialist leaders had "lost sight of Socialism's original purpose, that goal became 'constructive reforms' and cabinet portfolios—the cooperation of classes." Moreover, the Socialist leaders were ready to "share responsibility with the bourgeoisie in the control of the capitalist state even to the extent of defending the bourgeoisie against the working class." (*Left Wing Manifesto.*)

And what was the position of the Left wing on the question of the capitalist state? Says the Manifesto:

"Marx declared that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.' This machinery must be destroyed. . . . The attitude toward the state divides the Anarchist (anarcho-syndicalist), the

'moderate Socialist' and the revolutionary Socialist. Eager to abolish the state (which is the ultimate purpose of revolutionary Socialism), the Anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist fail to realize that a state is necessary in the transition period from capitalism to Socialism; the 'moderate Socialist' proposes to use the bourgeois state with its fraudulent democracy, its illusory theory of the 'unity of all classes,' its standing army, police, and bureaucracy oppressing and baffling the masses; the revolutionary Socialist maintains that the bourgeois state must be completely destroyed and proposes the organization of a new state—the state of the organized producers—of the Federated Soviets—on the basis of which alone can Socialism be introduced."

And this is the position which Hillquit, Oneal & Co. had met with the charge of Anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism!

It is obvious that in formulating its views on the question of the capitalist state, the Left wing was trying to follow Lenin (the Bolsheviks), many of whose writings—as *The State and Revolution*—were already available at that time in the United States. But it is just as obvious from the Left Wing Manifesto as a whole, that many leading Leninist ideas escaped the Left wing altogether while others were insufficiently understood. Thus, the Manifesto throughout speaks of "moderate" Socialism as the exponent of opportunism in the parties of the Second International without a differentiated and close analysis of the various shades and forms of opportunism. This was especially necessary at that time, as Leninism repeatedly insisted, because the most dangerous variety of opportunism was then the Centrist group (Kautsky, Trotsky, Hillquit to a certain extent, etc.). Failing to expose the nature of Centrism as hidden opportunism and the most effective cover for the open betrayals of the social-chauvinists, the Left Wing Manifesto disarmed itself to a considerable extent in the struggle

against the opportunist leaders of the Socialist Party of America, which, under the guidance of Hillquit, occupied a position of Right Centrism rather than of open social-chauvinism; or, more precisely, it was maneuvering between social-chauvinism and Centrism. It was partly for this reason that the weakest part of the Manifesto is the one that deals with the nature of "moderate" Socialism in the United States. This very serious error was only partly rectified in the agitation of the Left-wing press, with the result that the Hillquit leadership was able, more or less easily, to carry on "Left" maneuvers (willingness to join the Communist International on certain conditions) even after the formation of the Communist Party.

Nor does the Manifesto analyze the economic and class basis of opportunism, namely, the corruption of the labor bureaucracy and aristocracy by imperialism. There is no need for this article to explain the importance—theoretical and practical—of this Leninist idea. The question arises, how could this idea have escaped the Left Wing Manifesto, especially in the United States of that period where the corruption was so ripe and where the splitting up of the working class was being carried out so consistently and openly by the reformists, most particularly by the leaders of the American Federation of Labor? That the Left wing was familiar with this idea, and was developing it in its discussions of trade union questions, can be seen from the Left press. Then how could it happen that, of all places, this should be missing in the Manifesto? We may come perhaps closer to the explanation of this fact when we note another omission in the Manifesto: it says nothing about the American Federation of Labor. Did the Left wing have any ideas about it? It did. And its main idea was that

the A. F. of L. was an organization of the aristocracy and bureaucracy of labor and hence so hopelessly reactionary that it was considered totally out of the sphere of interest and activity of revolutionary Socialists. Thus, while the Manifesto proclaims definitely its position in favor of class struggle industrial unionism, it says nothing about the existing mass trade union movement under reformist leadership. What does this show? It shows (1) that the Left wing had not yet turned its face to the masses, their organizations and their daily struggles; and (2) that the Left wing's understanding of the role of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy as the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class was more that of the sectarian Socialist Labor Party (S.L.P.) than that of the Bolshevik Leninists.

On the question of imperialist war, which was the second big issue between the Lefts and the reformists, the Left wing took a position which was substantially that of the Bolsheviks. The war question played a very important part, perhaps a decisive part, in precipitating the rise and consolidation of the Left wing. As late as April, 1917, the time of the St. Louis Convention of the Socialist Party, the Left elements still constituted an undifferentiated mass of many tendencies and shades, running from a relatively developed ideology of revolutionary Socialism to outright Centrism. The policy of the official party leadership (Hillquit & Co.), while social-chauvinist in substance, took the form of a series of maneuvers, between outright social-chauvinism and Centrism infused with a considerable dose of pacifism. The result was that the St. Louis Convention produced no real division between social-chauvinism and true revolutionary internationalism. This convention was overwhelmingly Left, but in the above-described sense.

Only five delegates voted for the Spargo report (open pro-war position); the rest of the votes (172) were distributed between two anti-war resolutions. But what was the nature of these resolutions? While they differed somewhat in form and in minor detail, they were nearly identical in substance, and the substance was a grain of genuine revolutionary opposition to the imperialist war dissolved in a sea of pacifism and reformism. The majority anti-war report, which received 141 votes, was submitted to the convention by Hillquit; the first minority anti-war report, which received 31 votes, was submitted by Boudin. This alone—the fact that these two men were allowed to represent the anti-war position—shows how immature were the views and attitudes of the Left elements at the convention. And the resolutions bear that out.

However, soon after the convention things began to move pretty swiftly. There set in a process of rapid differentiation within the Left, an unmasking of the maneuvers of the Hillquit leadership and the beginning of a crystallization of a movement which resulted in the organization of the Left wing of 1918. This was brought about primarily by the following factors: the open and flagrant betrayal of the St. Louis anti-war resolution by the Hillquit leadership, which was especially glaring in Hillquit's New York Mayoralty campaign in the summer of 1918 and in the pro-war activities of the Socialist aldermen in New York, in the decision of the National Socialist Party Conference to solidarize itself with the social-chauvinist Inter-Allied Socialist Conference, etc.; the beginnings of mass disillusionment with the gigantic swindle of the "war to end war" and to make the world "safe for democracy"; the activities of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party to rally and

organize all the true internationalists throughout the world, which were beginning to be more widely understood by the class-conscious workers in the United States; and the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, which demonstrated the correctness of the Leninist principle of transforming imperialist war into civil war for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus the Left wing of 1918 not only succeeded in salvaging from the St. Louis resolution the grain of genuine internationalism that it contained but it also developed this further into a revolutionary position along the lines of the Bolshevik point of view.

Closely allied with the war question was the question of international affiliation. Prior to the entry of the United States into the war, the Hillquit leadership of the Socialist Party tried to establish itself in the position of so-called arbiter and peacemaker between the various groups in the Second International. In Hillquit's own words (*Labor Year Book* 1917-1918), the Socialist Party had "preserved an attitude of strict neutrality toward the belligerent powers before our entrance in the war" and had at all times "endeavored to re-unite the Socialist International and to revive it as a factor for lasting peace within and among the nations of the world." The reader will see that this was in essence the position of social-chauvinism dictated at the time by the interests of American imperialism which (through the Wilson administration) was also trying to maintain strict neutrality, seeking to function as "peacemaker" between the warring nations. The Hillquit leadership, until the entrance of the U.S. into the war, was, more or less frankly, trying to serve the interests of its "own" bourgeoisie in the sphere of international relations.

On the other hand, the Left elements in the Socialist Party were definitely in sympathy only with the *Left elements* in the Second International (Zimmerwald and Kiental). But this sympathy was as yet (before 1918) undifferentiated, with only a relatively small part of the American Lefts definitely leaning toward the then extreme Left of Zimmerwald and Kiental—the Bolsheviks and their followers. But also on this question the crucial months of 1917-1918 brought in clarity and definiteness in political alignments in the American labor movement. The Left wing of 1918 came into existence taking its position on international affiliation together with the Bolsheviks, expressing on this question, as on all the other issues, the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the membership of the Socialist Party.

As a result the Hillquit leadership saw itself compelled to engage in a lot of maneuvers calculated to cheat the party membership and to check the growth of the Left wing. Hillquit, Oneal & Co. even began to talk of the collapse of the Second International and promised to join in the rebuilding of the International only with such parties as had not been in coalition with the bourgeoisie during the war. Of course, any honest following up of such promises should have led to joining with the Bolsheviks in effecting a complete break with the social-chauvinists and Centrists. But the official leadership of the Socialist Party were only maneuvering and cheating. All the while, they were *in deeds* supporting the policies of Woodrow Wilson (their own bourgeoisie), seeking to "rebuild" the International with the same social-chauvinist and Centrist elements that had led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914. These maneuvers, of even a more "Left" character,

they continued also after the formation of the Communist Party in 1919, inasmuch as considerable numbers of the Socialist Party membership, which did not join the Communist movement in 1919 but preferred to stay in the S.P. in the hope of making it more revolutionary, were waveringly but none the less definitely pushing in the direction of the Communist International. It was this wavering group that forced through, at the Socialist Party Convention in September, 1919, a resolution "in support of the Third (Moscow) International not because it supports the 'Moscow' programs and methods, but because 'Moscow' is doing something which is really challenging world imperialism" and because "it is proletarian." Considering these very substantial reservations to the program and methods of the Communist International, and considering also the decisive fact that this resolution was being passed at the time when the Left wing was already organizing itself separately into a Communist Party, the above resolution was objectively playing into the hands of Hillquit & Co., who were using it as a weapon *against* the Communist International, while some of the elements who supported this resolution were subjectively and consciously Centrist. The bulk of this group began to see the truth of this contention only later on when they too broke with the Socialist Party and joined with the Communists (1921).

When the Bolsheviks and their supporters issued the call for the constituent Congress to organize the Communist International, the issue of international affiliation in the Socialist Party came to a head. The Left wing initiated a referendum in the party on the following proposal: "that the Socialist Party shall participate in an international congress or conference called by, or in which participate,

the Communist Party of Russia (Bolshevik) and the Communist Labor Party of Germany (Spartacan)." Because of the sabotage and delay of the Socialist Party bureaucracy, the results of this referendum became known only in May, 1919, after the First Congress of the Communist International had already been held (March, 1919). The result of this referendum showed that the proposal of the Left wing was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the members. No wonder Hillquit & Co. did not want to make the result known. It might be relevant to observe in this connection that the reformists who made their main stand upon "democracy" as against the dictatorship of the proletariat were flaunting and violating every rule of inner-party democracy (betraying the St. Louis anti-war resolution, violating the international affiliation referendum, etc.), in order to make the Socialist Party safe for the democracy of Morgan, Rockefeller & Co.

Thus, the three principal issues of the Left wing against the reformists in the S.P. were the dictatorship of the proletariat versus bourgeois democracy, revolutionary struggle against imperialist war and proletarian internationalism versus social-chauvinism, and the Communist International versus the Second International. All these issues arose and matured on the background of the general fight of the Lefts for the revolutionary class struggle against reformism and class collaboration. In its general fight for class struggle policies and tactics, the Left wing (especially in its Manifesto) emphasized particularly two points: the Marxian conception of the class struggle as a political struggle and the need of a *revolutionary use* of parliamentary action and the need of class struggle industrial unionism.

It is well known that the reformists in the pre-war

Second International had reduced the political struggle of the proletariat merely to parliamentary campaigns, and these campaigns they had reduced to a purely legalistic activity for reforming, that is, strengthening, capitalism. This was also the policy of the official leadership of the Socialist Party. But here the Left wing was confronted with certain peculiarities in the American labor movement. These were (1) the fact that the dominating labor organizations from the point of view of ideological and political influence among the workers were the trade unions and not the Socialist Parties, the A. F. of L. under Gompers being then the most important organization in the trade union field; (2) the fact that the official attitude of the Gompers bureaucracy toward the Socialist Party *as a party* was one of hostility and opposition which, however, did not prevent the closest collaboration of the Socialist trade union bureaucrats with Gompers; (3) the fact that the Hillquit leadership maintained an attitude of Socialist Party non-interference in the affairs of the trade unions, which in practice led to collaboration with Gompers, which, in its turn, meant collaboration with the capitalists.

The Left wing sharply challenged the narrow-parliamentary and legalistic conception of political action as well as the official S.P. attitude of "non-interference" in the economic struggles of the workers and their mass organizations. The Manifesto states its position in the following way:

"We assert with Marx that 'the class struggle is essentially a political struggle' and we can only accept his own oft-repeated interpretation of that phrase. The class struggle, whether it manifests itself on the industrial field or in the direct struggle for governmental control, is essentially a struggle for the capture and destruction of the capitalist state. This is a political act.

In this broader view of the term 'political,' Marx includes revolutionary industrial action. In other words, the objective of Socialist industrial action is 'political' in the sense that it aims to undermine the bourgeois state which 'is nothing less than a machine for the oppression of one class by another and that no less so in a democratic republic than in a monarchy.' "

On the question of parliamentary action, which the Manifesto considers only as one phase of political action and not the most important one, it says the following:

"It (parliamentary action) must at all times struggle to arouse the revolutionary mass action of the proletariat—its use is both agitational and obstructive. It must on all issues wage war upon capitalism and the state. Revolutionary Socialism uses the forums of parliament for agitation but it does not intend to and cannot use the bourgeois state as a means of introducing socialism; this bourgeois state must be destroyed by the mass action of the revolutionary proletariat. The proletarian dictatorship in the form of a Soviet state is the immediate objective of the class struggle."

These rather lengthy quotations are reproduced here for the reason that they show the weak as well as the strong sides of the Left wing. It is clear that the general trend of the Lefts on these issues was away from reformism and toward Bolshevism. The central Marxist-Leninist idea is here: that the class struggle is a struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the revolutionary party of the proletariat must organize and direct all the daily manifestations of the class struggle from this point of view. Thus, the issue with reformism was drawn clearly, but not clearly enough. The Left wing lacked the correct Leninist conception of the *dialectics* of the class struggle and of the role of the Party in it.

On the dialectics of the class struggle. The Left wing

correctly emphasized the primacy of mass action, insisting that all the forms of activity of the revolutionary party of the workers be subordinated to the end of arousing and organizing the struggles of the masses against their exploiters. But the Left wing did not sufficiently understand that revolutionary mass action does not spring out all ready-made to conform to some pattern previously drawn up. The Left wing did not seem to realize that revolutionary mass action grows out only of the real living issues of the class struggle, as it develops day by day, that these issues are varied and manifold (sometimes big and sometimes apparently "small"), and that, depending upon the objective and subjective factors, these daily struggles will jump up very rapidly to higher forms of mass action or they may not rise higher at all or develop more slowly.

On the role of the Party. Here again the Left wing correctly emphasized the Leninist idea of the primacy of the Party as the leader of all proletarian struggles (without, however, showing any understanding of the role of the Party as the leader of all oppressed: toiling farmers and Negroes). But what was to be the role of the Party *concretely* in the daily struggles of the masses for their *partial demands*? How was the Party to deepen and widen these struggles into political and revolutionary mass action? To this the Left wing gave no answer or rather it gave the wrong answer. The Manifesto says: "It is the task of a revolutionary Socialist Party to direct the struggles of the proletariat and provide a program for the culminating crisis." The reference here is to the revolutionary crisis and the struggle for power, and the assumption here is that the American proletariat will get to this stage merely by the party carrying on *agitation* for its program. But how?

The Leninist idea of revolutionary agitation is that it be carried on on the basis of concrete struggles for specific demands and that in the course of these struggles the Party aims to widen and deepen their political content, organizing the masses, organizing the Party, thus leading the masses up, *on the basis of their own experience*, to higher forms of revolutionary mass action. The Left wing had no such idea. As already pointed out, it had a non-dialectical conception of the class struggle and it suffered greatly from an underestimation of the role of the Party as organizer and leader of the daily struggles of the masses as well as *organizer* of the proletarian revolution.

These weaknesses made themselves felt very strongly in the position of the Left wing on trade union questions. Here the Left wing sought to combat the craft and "pure and simple" trade unionism of the Gompers bureaucracy in the A. F. of L., on the one hand, and the official S.P. non-interference but practical collaboration with the Gompers bureaucracy, on the other hand. To accomplish this aim, the Left wing formulated the following position: "Industrial unionism, the organization of the proletariat in accordance with the integration of industry and for the overthrow of capitalism, is a necessary phase of revolutionary Socialist agitation." But in taking this position the Left wing did not rise much above the traditional, that is, sectarian policies of industrial unionism as practiced by the dominating element in the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) and in the S.L.P. (Socialist Labor Party). To be sure, the Left wing was largely free (not fully) of the syndicalist conception of industrial unionism, but the sectarian understanding of it was there. The correct fight for industrial unionism in the United States called for a policy

of active participation in the American Federation of Labor (the largest mass trade union organization), the systematic building of a Left wing within it and participation in and leadership of the daily economic and other struggles of the workers against their exploiters. But this is not what the Left wing was proposing to do. Its full proposal on this question in the Manifesto reads as follows:

"Realizing that a political party cannot reorganize and reconstruct the industrial organizations of the working class, and that that is the task of the economic organizations themselves, we demand that the Party assist this process of reorganization by a propaganda for revolutionary industrial unionism as part of its general activities. We believe it is the mission of the Socialist movement to encourage and assist the proletariat to adopt newer and more effective forms of organization and to stir it into newer and more revolutionary modes of action."

The A. F. of L. is not in the picture at all. The Party is called upon to fight for industrial unionism only by means of general propaganda. The fight for industrial unionism is conceived as more or less of an organizational problem instead of as an organic part of the general revolutionization of the working class and its mass organizations and the struggle against the reformist trade union leaders. It will also be seen from the above quotation that the Left wing was not yet completely free of the Hillquit policy of "non-interference" in the trade unions, for that is the meaning of the statement that "a political party cannot reorganize and reconstruct the industrial organizations of the working class." Trying to avoid the pitfalls of S.L.P. sectarianism, the Left wing failed to break altogether with the official S.P. opportunism on the trade union question.

It is apparent that Lenin's advice on this question to the

Socialist Propaganda League of America (1915) was either unknown to the Left wing of 1918 or so little understood that it made no mark on its policies. Lenin endorsed the position of the Lefts against craft unions and for industrial unions. But seeing the mechanical and sectarian twist which the issue is receiving in the U.S., Lenin finds it necessary to urge "the most active participation of all Party members in the economic struggle and in *all* trade unions and cooperative organizations of the workers." The emphasis upon the word "all" is Lenin's and the meaning is clear: fight for industrial unionism by participating in the economic struggles of the masses and by working in all unions, no matter how reactionary their leadership. This meant primarily the unions of the American Federation of Labor. This advice of Lenin became effective in the American labor movement only in later years, subsequent to the organization and unification of the Communist movement and with the rise of the trade union Left wing (the Trade Union Educational League headed by Foster), under the guidance of the Communist International and of the Red International of Labor Unions.

From the above it will be understood how the Left wing came to adopt a very sectarian and ultra-Left position on the question of partial demands generally. The Left wing correctly centered its attack upon the reformism of the S.P. leadership, pointing out the "social-reform" character of the S.P. program and platforms as well as its practices. This was a move in the direction of Bolshevism, which move, at the time, drew a pretty clear line of demarcation between the opportunists and revolutionary Socialists. But unlike the Bolsheviks, who always formulated partial demands for mass struggles and through these led the masses to higher

struggles and to the seizure of power, the Left wing ruled out partial demands altogether. Here we have a case of the Left wing trying to extricate itself from the opportunist morass of the S.P. and falling into the sectarian pit of the S.L.P. (which also ruled out partial demands). The Left wing position was that "the Party must teach, propagate and agitate *exclusively* for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism through a proletarian dictatorship." (Our emphasis—A.B.) This attitude, which the Left wing carried over into the Communist movement, proved one of the main obstacles to the growth of our Party in the first years after its formation.

The social-fascist slanderers of our movement (Oneal & Co.) like to insist that the Communists in later years became more "moderate" for a while, incorporating into their programs and platforms the same social-reform planks for which the S.P. leadership was attacked as opportunist in 1918-1919. What the social-fascists pretend not to understand is this, that on the question of partial demands (as on many others) the Communist movement of the United States was developing *from Left Socialism toward Bolshevism*. What appears to the social-fascists as a *return* by the Communists to S.P. social-reform practices is in reality *a more radical break with opportunism, Right and "Left,"* for underestimation of partial demands and struggle in the Leninist sense is an expression of opportunism covered with Left phrases; what actually took place in the Communist movement, and is still taking place, but on a higher plane, is a process of freeing itself from opportunism and sectarianism and an ever closer approach to Bolshevism, not alone in theory but also in the daily practice of mass revolutionary activity. In this process the Communist move-

ment is learning to carry on the Bolshevik struggle against opportunism on two fronts, Right and "Left," which the Left wing did not understand.

The Left wing also took issue with the reformists on the question of the role of the Party and its organizational structure. But on this question the Left wing attacked only the most obvious faults of the organization, such as its loose petty-bourgeois structure, the lack of a single political line obligatory for every Party unit and member, the fact that the Party press and educational institutions were run as the private domain of individual "prominent" Socialists rather than as Party institutions under Party control and also the fact that the leading organs of the Party were totally *irresponsible* before the Party membership, violating time and again the expressed wishes of the membership, since these wishes were opposed to the opportunism of the S.P. official leadership. The Left wing demanded a correction of these opportunist abuses but it had not yet risen to the understanding that a true revolutionary working class party must be a *different type of party* in respect to its leading role in the class struggle in all its forms, in its relation to the non-Party mass organizations as the Party's transmission belt to the working class, the principle of democratic centralism, the primacy of the shop structure of organization, Bolshevik discipline, etc. Thus, one might say that the Left wing only signalized the need of a new type of party without going much further, mainly because it was not yet fully free from the influence of Right and "Left" opportunism, the most decisive expression of which on this question was a considerable degree of faith in the *opportunist theory of spontaneity*. We have already seen above that the Left wing assigned to the Party only an

agitational role in the daily struggles of the masses *prior* to the emergence of a revolutionary crisis, and that only with the arrival of the revolutionary crisis does the Party step in as the real organizer and leader of the fight—which is the fight for power. In other words, the maturing of the revolutionary crisis on its subjective side was conceived largely as a spontaneous development. Hence the inability of the Left wing to come closer to Leninism on the question of the role of the Party and its structure.

To conclude with the subject of issues between the Left wing of 1918 and the reformist leadership of the S.P., it is important to point out at least two of the more fundamental issues which were practically not raised by the Left wing. These are the Negro question and the agrarian-farmer question. These omissions will seem today even more astounding when we consider the fact that the Left wing did place the struggle for power and the dictatorship of the proletariat in the very center of its theoretical and political fight against the opportunists, showing thereby the influence of Leninism. Then how could the Left wing fail to raise the question of the *allies* of the proletariat in the United States—the nationally oppressed Negro masses and the toiling farmers? Besides, many of the implications of the Negro question were at the time (1918-1919) manifesting themselves acutely in the class struggle and in the unions (Chicago stockyards) where the Left elements of the A. F. of L., under Foster, were grappling with these problems, trying to find a solution for them. Under these conditions, the failure of the Left wing to raise the Negro and agrarian questions would show that the Left wing ideology was still largely dominated by reformism and sectarianism: it took over from the S.P. leadership its ignoring

of the Negro and farmer questions, which to reformists could not appear as basic problems of the proletarian struggle for power; it also took over some of the narrow craft ideology, especially of the reformists in the unions, which cannot see the working class as *a class* leading the fight against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in alliance with and supported by the Negro masses and the toiling farmers; while its purely agitational attitude to the class struggle, and general sectarian approach, prevented it from feeling and evaluating the pressure of these issues that was coming from the daily struggles of the masses.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL BREAK WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY OPPORTUNISTS

From its very inception, the Left wing realized that its task was to bring about a complete break with the opportunists in the S.P., not only ideologically and politically but also organizationally. While theoretically the Left wing (with the exception of its most advanced elements) was rather hazy on the especially dangerous role at the time of Centrism, in practice the fight was developed for the organizational break also with the Centrists.

In effect the organizational break with the opportunists began to take place immediately after the organization of the Left wing, while it still was formally a part of the Socialist Party. Moreover, as Left groups were becoming crystallized in various language sections, cities and branches of the party, which took place throughout 1918, these groups were practically ignoring the opportunist and social-chauvinist policies of the official leadership and were carrying on their agitation and other mass work more or less in accord with their own view of revolutionary Socialism.

This occurred especially on such issues as the war, international affiliations, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (and later the proletarian revolution in Germany), the Left groups undertaking to carry out in practice their own point of view even before there was a national Left wing organization and a national program. And wherever they did so, the Left elements had the expressed overwhelming support of the party membership. Whatever truly revolutionary and internationalist work was carried on by the Socialists of the United States at that time, was carried on *despite* the official S.P. leadership (Hillquit & Co.) and not because of it.

But on the question of how soon and in what form the complete and *formal* break with the S.P. opportunists should take place, there soon developed in the Left wing serious differences of opinion. These differences came to sharp expression at the first National Left Wing Conference, held in New York, in June, 1919. One section of the delegates stood out for the immediate (or as soon as practically possible) convocation of a national convention of all Left wing elements for the purpose of organizing the Communist Party of America, while another section favored a slower and more flexible mode of procedure calculated to win for the Communist Party also the more backward and hesitating elements of the S.P. This is not the place to discuss elaborately these differences, except to point out the following: that it was a difference of tactics, and not of principle as some of the Left wing delegates were inclined to think at the time. Both sections had given unmistakable proof of their determination to break formally with the opportunists and to organize the Communist Party. But one section of the Left wing proceeded from the belief that the

formal break with the opportunists had been delayed long enough, that there was no hope of the Left wing securing formal control of the S.P. organization for the purpose of transforming it into a Communist Party because of the wholesale expulsions carried on by the Hillquit leadership, and that the hesitant Left elements who would not join in the organization of the Communist Party at once were either no good or would come to the Party later. The other section was not at all sure that the formal break had been delayed but was agreed that the time for the break had already arrived. However, it argued that considerable numbers of party members among the native-born workers, although in general sympathy with the Left elements, were not yet ready for a formal break, but that they would be won over soon to this step when it became more obvious to them that it was Hillquit bureaucracy that was splitting the party and not the Left Wing. Hence they proposed a slower and less direct course which also led to the organization of the Communist Party in the United States. These differences, which might have been composed if not completely eliminated, were aggravated, however, by disagreements on the question of language federations in the party, and also by a certain degree of factionalism. The result was a split in the Left Wing, each side proceeding to carry out its point of view.

There is this to be said on the question that is relevant even today. The formal break with the opportunists in the S.P. *was delayed*. Had there been in the United States, during the war and especially in the crucial years of 1918-1919, a strong revolutionary working class party—a Leninist Party—the mobilization of the deep and powerful mass upsurge of the American workers of that period would have

given the class struggle in the United States an entirely different turn. And the upsurge was not confined to the workers alone but was arousing also the Negro masses and the toiling farmers in various degree. One cannot say whether or not a revolutionary situation would have developed in the United States in the first period of post-war capitalism had there been a strong revolutionary workers' party, but its absence certainly militated against the revolutionary advance which was objectively being prepared and this absence of a revolutionary party is directly traceable to the *historically delayed* break of the revolutionary elements from the opportunists in the Socialist movement.

From this, however, it does not follow that in the month of June, 1919, the tactic of immediate break was the best. Certainly, when both sections of the Left Wing were finally agreed that by September (the time of the emergency convention of the S.P.) the formal break would have to be consummated, and when mass sentiment inside and outside the party was continually rising in favor of the Left Wing, the more flexible tactics proposed for the winning of the still hesitant elements, especially among the native-born workers, were correct and in no way militated against the Left Wing widening its independent revolutionary work among the masses outside of the S.P. Both could have and should have been combined. Failure to realize this resulted in a split and in the formation of two Communist Parties in September, 1919—the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party.

Thus the formal break with the opportunists in the S.P. became consummated and the basis laid for the building of a mass Communist Party in the United States. Both Communist conventions demonstrated in their delibera-

tions and programs considerably more clarity in their understanding of Leninism and its application in this country than did the Left Wing. In the programs adopted by these conventions we already find *the beginnings* of an understanding of the importance of partial struggles, of their dialectics, and of their relation to the preparation of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. We also find there a fuller understanding of the role of the Communist Party as the leader of these struggles, a closer approach to the practical problems of the class struggle and of trade union work. In other words, the conventions which formed the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party took one more step away from Left Socialism and toward Communism.

As already pointed out in the opening paragraphs of this article, the historic role of the Left Wing of 1918-1919 consisted in this, that it served as a bridge for the class-conscious workers of the United States from vague Left Socialism and general proletarian militancy to the solid foundations of Leninism. This process of development was by no means completed at the first Communist conventions but has been going on continuously in the Communist movement throughout its history. Only, with each succeeding period in the class struggle, old problems appeared in *a new form*, new and stronger forces were being developed within our movement for the successful solution of these problems, the general class struggle and our Party with it rising to higher levels of revolutionary advance. This is the struggle for the Bolshevization of our Party.

The question may be raised as to whether the present "Left" Socialist tendencies are fulfilling the same role as the Left Wing of 1918. The answer is this: far from playing

the same role, they are playing the *opposite role*. Where the Left Wing of 1918 was a bridge *to* Communism, the present "Left" Socialists, whether those in the S.P. or the Musteites, are actually building a dam *against* Communism. This does not mean that the rank-and-file proletarian elements in the S.P. who incline toward the Left and the working class elements of the Muste movement are following their "Left" reformist leaders because they (the rank and file) want a dam against Communism. Not at all. Rather these reformist leaders put on a "Left" coloring in order to stop this rank and file from moving further to the Left, that is, to Communism. Let us make no mistake about it. The rank and file of the reformist organizations—Socialist and trade union—is genuinely moving to the Left—to the Communist Party and to class struggle unionism. Not all of them are as yet conscious of where they are going; some of them still have many bourgeois prejudices against Communism instilled into their minds primarily by the "Left" reformists and most especially by the Musteites; but if this rank and file is ever to have what it is looking for—class struggle and a true working class party—it will inevitably come to Communism. Of course, if we leave uncombated the activities of the "Left" Socialists and Musteites, if we don't expose them systematically and in the course of the class struggle, with the united front policy, as "Left" social-fascists, and if we don't prove in practice the correctness of our line and our ability to put it into effect. Muste and Co. may succeed to an extent in delaying and obstructing the drift to Communism. Hence, the great significance of the Open Letter and the need of its earnest and speedy execution.

The Party Anniversary in the Light of Our Tasks*

IN ITS Open Letter to the Sixth Convention of our Party the Executive Committee of the Communist International said the following:

"The Workers (Communist) Party is obviously still unprepared for the great class conflicts which will inevitably arise on the basis of the sharpening class relations in the United States. *Its past still weighs upon its present* [Our emphasis—A.B.]. The relics of the previous period of its existence form the greatest obstacle in the path it has to travel before it successfully passes the turning point and develops *in the shortest possible time* from a numerically small propagandist organization into a mass political party of the American working class."

This task, the task of developing our Party from a numerically small propagandist organization into a mass political party of the working class, the Open Letter qualified as "the chief, fundamental and decisive task to which all other tasks must be entirely subordinated." Furthermore, the Open Letter said that this is the task "which the whole objective situation in the United States, the entire post-war development of American imperialism, places before the Party."

The Address of the E.C.C.I. to all members of the Com-

* Reprinted from *The Communist* of December, 1931.

munist Party of the United States, after the Sixth Convention, approaches our problems in this period from the same angle. The Address stresses the vital necessity of our Party converting itself *in the shortest possible time* into a mass political Party of the working class. It points out that this task has assumed a particularly decisive character in view of the fundamental tasks arising before us "in connection with the accentuation of the inner and outer contradictions of American imperialism in the present period."

Since the E.C.C.I. Address in the summer of 1929, our Party has been engaged in the work of converting itself into a mass political party of the American working class. Its chief weapon for the attainment of this end has been and continues to be the organization and leadership of the daily struggles of the masses against the capitalist offensive and the liquidation of the relics of the previous period which obstruct our progress in the present period.

The Twelfth Anniversary of our Party, which occurred in September of this year, finds us on the path which leads to a mass Communist Party and freed from some of the relics of the previous period—the inner factional struggle—which were obstructing our growth. The turning point, however, we have not yet passed—that turning point which we must successfully pass in order to be able to convert our Party into a mass political Party in the shortest possible time. The Thirteenth Plenum of our Central Committee declared that only "the first beginning of the turn toward mass work was made," that "the process is only begun," that we must now seize that particular link in the chain which would enable us to pass to the next link and to turn the corner. The Plenum has pointed out to the Party the nature of that link. It is the building of the

Party and revolutionary unions in the shops, organizing and leading the daily struggles of the employed and unemployed workers, combatting energetically all manifestations of opportunism. The carrying out of the practical tasks formulated by the Thirteenth Plenum, increasing the tempo of our work day by day in order to catch up with the demands of the sharpening crisis and war danger, will create the prerequisites for the successful passing of the turning point from which the Party will be able to develop in the shortest possible time into a mass political party of the American working class.

To fulfil the practical tasks formulated by the Thirteenth Plenum means to continue to liquidate those relics of the previous period which are still obstructing our growth. These are chiefly remnants of opportunism—Right opportunism (the main danger in the present period) and "Left" sectarianism which is also opportunism. It is from this angle that we must approach the review of the Party's past development on the occasion of its Twelfth Anniversary.

THREE PERIODS IN THE PARTY'S DEVELOPMENT

It is possible to distinguish three definite periods in the development of our Party. (1) The first period is the period of separation from social-reformism and the gathering of the Communists in the United States into one Party. (2) The second period is the period in which the Communist Party developed itself into a propagandist of Communism and functioned primarily as a propagandist organization. (3) The third period is the period in which the Party begins to emerge from the propagandist stage, moving to the turning point from which will become possible its rapid conversion into a mass political party of the working class.

This division of our Party's past development into definite and distinct periods, like every other historic demarcation, must be viewed dialectically. That is, that some of the problems and tasks of one period were carried over into the succeeding period and that the problems and tasks of the succeeding period were already present, at least in embryonic form, in the previous period. This, however, does not prevent us from distinguishing definite periods in the Party history. In what sense? In the sense that each period placed before us specific and peculiar tasks, which we undertook to fulfil in a certain way, thus reaching the next period, the successive stage in the development of the Party, with its own specific and peculiar task.

First Period. We defined the first period as the one in which took place the differentiation and separation from social-reformism and the gathering together of the American Communists into one Party. This period may be said to have concluded with the organization of the Workers Party in 1921.

The beginning of this period is marked by intense ideological and organizational struggle in the American labor movement (Socialist and trade unions) of the adherents of militant class struggle against the reformist policies of the official leadership. The fight of the American labor militants and Left Socialists against Gompersism and Hillquitism was *essentially* (but not fully) of the same character as the fight of the revolutionary Marxists against the opportunists and revisionists in the Second International in the period that preceded the late imperialist world war.

When did this period begin? In a broad historical sense, the crystallization of the theory and practice of the revo-

lutionary class struggle of the American proletariat, whose complete and conscious expression is Marxism-Leninism, began with the first manifestations of working class struggle against capitalist exploitation in the United States. The historic roots of the Communist movement of the United States go back to the birth of the American working class and the class struggle. These roots have absorbed and grown upon the life-blood of all the struggles of the American working class and its advance guard through the various periods in the history of the class struggle in the United States.

But in a narrow sense, in the sense of the phase that immediately preceded the formation of the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party (C.P. and C.L.P.) in September, 1919, the first period of our Party's history can be said to begin with the organizational crystallization of the Left Wing in the Socialist Party in 1918. The organization of the Left Wing was preceded by years of struggle against reformism in the Socialist and trade union movement of the country. This struggle, with its ups and downs, had several culminating points in the years of 1905, 1912, 1914 and 1917. Through all these struggles the Left and militant elements in the labor movement had given expression, often in a confused and incomplete manner, to the interests and aspirations of the American proletariat as against the corrupt labor bureaucracy, aristocracy and petty-bourgeois reformism. This was in essence the meaning of the struggle for industrial unionism as against craft unionism, for class struggle as against class collaboration, for revolutionary Socialism as against the petty-bourgeois reformism of the Hillquits and Bergers. The consolidation of American imperialism in the pre-war period, with the

consequent sharpening of all inherent contradictions of capitalism, has produced on the one hand Gompersism and Hillquitism, the expression of the corrupt bureaucracy and aristocracy of labor, and on the other hand it has also produced the various Left and militant tendencies in the labor movement which gave expression to the awakening proletariat, to its dawning consciousness of the need of revolutionary class struggle and organization.

The Left Wing of the Socialist Party of 1918 was the forerunner and organizer of our Party. With it began (strictly speaking) the ideological and organizational differentiation of revolutionary Socialism—later, Communism—from reformism. This Left Wing was born in the heat and under the pressure of the late imperialist world war which opened up the epoch of proletarian and colonial revolutions, and at the inception of the great wave of strikes in the United States that followed the end of the war. Because of this fact, this Left Wing was more conscious of its mission and objective than its predecessors. It declared war against reformism along the entire front. It battled against Gompersism and Hillquitism on the question of war, taking its position against the imperialist war, at first semi-pacifist but later approaching the Leninist position. It sided unequivocally with the proletarian revolution in Russia. It was trying to link itself up internationally with the revolutionary Socialists led by Lenin in the Second International. With the formation of the Communist International, this Left Wing made its major battle of that period in the labor movement of the United States on the issue of breaking with the treacherous Second International and for joining the Communist International. It was in the process of this struggle against imperialism and

imperialist war, for the class struggle and against class collaboration, for revolutionary Socialism against petty-bourgeois reformism, for the proletarian revolution in Russia, for the Communist International against the Second International, that there began the process of *organizational* separation from the reformists in the Socialist Party which led to the organization of the two Communist Parties in September, 1919.

The organization of the two Communist Parties took place in the midst of the first period of the post-war development of capitalism, the period of "extremely acute crisis of the capitalist system and of direct revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat" (Resolution of the Sixth Congress of the C.I.). The working class of the United States was in great fermentation. Great strikes were in process of development in the steel industry, mining, railroad, meat-packing, etc. But the ideological differentiation between reformism and revolutionary Socialism was at that time very little known or understood by the masses. This fact, arising partly from the historically delayed organizational separation of the Socialists from the reformists, together with the formation of *two* Communist Parties struggling with each other, offers the main reason for the relative ineffectiveness of the Communist Parties in those strikes. The strong sectarian tendencies prevalent in the two parties at the time had worked toward the same end.

In view of the above, what were the specific tasks of the Communists of that period and to what extent did they succeed in fulfilling them?

The first of the tasks that were placed before us by the objective situation and by the internal condition of the young Communist movement at that time was *to unify it*,

to bring together all adherents of the Communist International *into one party*. This involved the task of *completing* the organizational break with the reformist political parties, since various groups of adherents of the Communist International had remained in the "Socialist" parties, especially the Socialist Party of America, subsequent to the formation of the Communist Parties in September, 1919, and the unification of these two parties (Communist Party and Communist Labor Party) into one party. The second task was to establish active contact with the proletarian masses and mass movements. This involved the task of penetrating the reformist mass organizations, especially the A. F. of L., the organization of the Communists and their sympathizers within the reformist unions for the struggle against Gompersism, the popularization of the Communist program among the masses on the basis of their daily struggles and experiences, and skillful resistance to the efforts of the reformists and the government to isolate us from the masses and to drive the young Communist movement underground (the Palmer raids), while building up all necessary machinery for the protection of the Party organization from governmental attacks. The third task was to deepen and extend the struggle against reformist ideology, to analyze the American situation in a theoretical way from the Communist point of view and to educate the membership to an understanding of Marxism-Leninism.

These tasks, which were placed before us by the external and internal conditions of the Communist movement at that time, were only partially fulfilled during the first period of the Party's existence. The vital task of establishing active contact with the masses and of organizing the Communists and militant workers within the A. F. of L.

for the struggle against the Gompers policies and leadership—this fundamental task of the first period was left almost untouched. This task, the fulfilment of which was to create the prerequisites for the independent leadership of the daily struggles of the workers by the Communists, began to be tackled in earnest only in the second period of the Party's existence, following the formation of the Workers Party at the end of 1921. Nor were the Communists successful in the first year or so in combatting effectively the wall of illegality that the government had tried to erect between our Party and the masses. However, the achievements of the period stand out quite clearly. The Communist movement was unified under the pressure and guidance of the Communist International. The Party withstood the terrific onslaught of the Palmer raids and the regime of persecution that followed. It succeeded in drawing a clear line of demarcation between itself and the reformists, drawing into its ranks and rallying around itself the most mature and militant elements in the labor movement. The Communists came to the first convention of the Workers Party with a clearer realization of the nature of those opportunist tendencies which have militated against the Party's growth, especially in the field of mass work.

What were those tendencies? First there was the "Left" opportunist conception that revolutionists can have nothing to do with reformist unions, that the Communists must not work in the reactionary unions of the A. F. of L., that they must build their own unions. Considering the objective situation of the time and the fact that the Communist movement had just been organized, this meant in practice no work in the unions and no mass work. It meant to condemn the Party to the position of a sect. On the

other hand, there was the Right opportunist conception, taken over from the S.P. reformist leadership, that we must live "in peace" with the reactionary bureaucrats of the A. F. of L. and that the "political arm" of the movement (the Party) must not interfere with and "dictate" its policies to the union. This meant to surrender the masses to Gompers and to the capitalists. It meant no work in the unions and no revolutionary mass work of any kind. These opportunist tendencies, especially the "Left" sectarian tendency, were primarily responsible for the fact that the fundamental tasks of our movement in its first period were fulfilled only partially, as was indicated above. These two opportunist tendencies have manifested themselves in all fields of Party activity—in the question of legal and illegal work, parliamentary activities, partial demands and daily economic struggles, etc. In the struggle against these tendencies, in the clarification of the correct policies with the direct and systematic assistance of the C.I. and R.I.L.U., the Party had moved forward to internal consolidation, to the establishment of contacts with the workers and their mass organizations, and to a better understanding of Leninist policies and tactics. In this way the Party had reached the second period of its existence, the next and higher stage in its development which was ushered in by the first convention of the Workers Party at the end of 1921.

Second Period. The second period in the history of our Party is the period in which it developed itself into a propagandist of Communism and functioned primarily as a propagandist organization. Essentially, the Party is still in this period, but just now it is beginning to emerge from it. Already there are signs to show that we are nearing

a new period in the life of the Party—the period of development into a mass political party of the American working class.

This period, which is thus far the longest in our Party's history, is marked by the following characteristics: (a) the Party carries on systematic work in the unions of the A. F. of L., taking the leadership in the organization of the Left Wing in the unions (Trade Union Educational League); (b) the Party begins to participate in the political struggles, especially in various election campaigns, aiming to apply in this field the policy of the united front, evolving in this process its labor party policies; (c) the illegal Communist Party and the Workers Party (its legal expression) become fully merged; (d) the Party takes the first steps in the direction of work among the Negro masses; (e) there become crystallized within the Party two rigid factions, carrying on an almost uninterrupted struggle during most of this period, until the summer of 1929 when the E.C.C.I. Address lays the basis for the liquidation of the factional situation; (f) the appearance of Trotskyism and the development of Right opportunism and the struggle of the Party against it.

The development of our Party in the course of these years was taking place on the basis and within the framework of the second period in the development of post-war capitalism. This was the period of "gradual and partial stabilization of the capitalist system, of the 'restoration' process of capitalist economy, of the development and expansion of the capitalist offensive and of the continuation of the defensive battles fought by the proletarian army weakened by severe defeats. On the other hand, this period was a period of rapid restoration in the U.S.S.R., of extremely important successes in the work of building up socialism,

and also of the growth of the political influence of the Communist Parties over the broad masses of the proletariat." (Resolution of Sixth Congress of the C.I.)

The peculiarities of the objective conditions at the time of the formation of the Workers Party (end of 1921 and beginning of 1922) arose from the fact that it was a period of transition from the first period of post-war capitalism to its second period. That is, the transition from the period of "extremely acute crisis of the capitalist system and of direct revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat" to the period of temporary and relative stabilization and "the continuation of the defensive battles fought by the proletarian army weakened by severe defeat." The greatest danger that confronted our Party at that time was the danger of "Left" sectarianism which threatened to isolate us from the masses by failing to utilize the then existing possibilities for Communist mass work, especially the work in the A. F. of L. and the systematic application of the united front policy. At the same time the Party was menaced by the tendencies of Right opportunism which tended to relinquish the independent revolutionary role of the Communist Party by various maneuvers on top with reformist leaders.

Between the years of 1922-1927 the Party developed into a propagandist organization. It functioned primarily as a propagandist of Communism. Its efforts to become a mass party of the American proletariat and the leader of the daily struggles of the workers against capitalist exploitation and capitalist rule have been seriously hampered by the opportunist tendencies and by the inner factional struggle, with the consequence that the beginning of the third period in the post-war development of capitalism found our Party

unprepared for the great class conflicts that have arisen and continue to arise in increasingly sharper forms.

The possibilities for our Party becoming the leader of the daily struggle of the masses, and hence for its conversion into the mass political party of the American proletariat, were already inherent in the objective conditions that were beginning to shape themselves around 1927. This was clearly seen in the big strike movements of that year (miners, furriers, garment workers, textile in New Bedford and Paterson) in which the Party and the T.U.E.L. were playing a leading and organizing role. From these struggles, and the independent leading role played by us in them, the road was opening up for a new period in the life of our Party. The second period of post-war capitalism was coming to an end and the third period was approaching with all the possibilities and responsibilities that this situation was bringing to us. But the Party was unable to utilize fully these possibilities, to reorientate itself and to make the turn toward the approaching new period, because of the acute factional situation in the Party and the serious Right opportunist tendencies that had accumulated in the Party in the previous years.

Hence the Open Letter of the E.C.C.I. to the Sixth Convention of the Party had to declare that "from a propagandist organization . . . the Workers (Communist) Party is *now beginning* [Our emphasis—A.B.] to turn into a mass Party," that "the Party is now just making its first steps on the new path. It is now just on the threshold between the old and new, it has not yet passed the turning point." It was in this letter that the E.C.C.I. also declared that "the existing factions must be resolutely and definitely liquidated. The factional struggle must be unconditionally

stopped. Without this *no mass Communist Party of the American proletariat can be organized.*"

The liquidation of factionalism which became a condition for the growth of the Party, for the successful struggle against the Right danger as the main danger in the present period and for the conversion of the Party into a mass Party, was accomplished after the Sixth Convention of the Party with the help of the Address of the E.C.C.I. which constitutes a milestone in the Party's history. In this way the conditions were created for a fresh and determined effort to pass the turning point that leads to the conversion from a propagandist organization into a mass political party of the American working class.

Third Period. This period we have defined as the one in which the Party begins to emerge from the propagandist stage, moving to the turning point from which will become possible its rapid conversion into a mass political party of the working class. Strictly speaking it is not yet a completely new period. It is more in the nature of a transition stage from the old to the new but with this specific characteristic, that the Party is now moving *unitedly, consciously and honestly* toward the turning point, the passage of which will mark the full unfolding of the third period—the rapid development of our Party into a mass party.

Herein lies the basic explanation of our lagging behind the radicalization of the masses. Whereas objectively the capitalist system and the world labor movement are already fully in the third period of post-war development, our Party still finds itself *in transition* to the present period. It is true that the tempo of our movement is continually increasing, but not sufficiently to catch up with the con-

tinued shattering of capitalist stabilization and the growing radicalization of the masses. The successive stages of the Party's development since the E.C.C.I. Address (the Seventh Convention, Twelfth and Thirteenth Plenum of the Central Committee) each marked a step in advance, at the same time taking note of the outstanding fact that we continue to lag behind. We must therefore make haste in the execution of the decisions of the Thirteenth Plenum.

The Twelfth Anniversary of our Party finds us free from factional divisions, united behind the Central Committee on the line of the C.I., extending our influence among the masses and our leadership of their daily struggles, and determined to convert ourselves into a mass party. Our Party stands out today as the only leader of the workers in their daily struggles against the capitalist offensive (unemployment, wage cuts, imperialist war and intervention, etc.). The great and historic strike of the miners, the strikes of the textile workers in Paterson and Lawrence, the struggles of the unemployed and the fight against imperialist war and intervention organized and led by our Party and the revolutionary unions of the Trade Union Unity League are ample proof of this fact; while the Lovestone and Cannon renegades have moved into the camp of the enemy. At the same time we are still hampered by some of the relics of the previous period of our existence (Right and "Left" opportunism, especially Right opportunism, formalism and bureaucracy), which we must combat consistently and energetically, as formulated by the Thirteenth Plenum of our Central Committee.

In its Address to our membership in the summer of 1929, the E.C.C.I. said:

"With a distinctness unprecedented in history, American capitalism is exhibiting now the effects of the inexorable laws of capitalist development, the laws of decline and downfall of capitalist society. The general crisis of capitalism is growing more rapidly than it may seem at first glance. The crisis will shake also the foundation of the power of American imperialism."

The truth of this prognostication is realized not only by us, members of the Party, but is beginning to be felt and understood by hundreds and thousands and millions of American workers. The deepening crisis, the war danger (war already a reality in Manchuria), the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the period of socialism—these are hastening the radicalization of the masses, leading them to a realization of the need of a revolutionary way out of the crisis. More than ever the masses need the leadership of our Party and the revolutionary unions of the T.U.U.L. This leadership we must bring to the masses without delay, exposing and combatting the Right and "Left" reformists with their renegade assistants that are trying desperately to check the radicalization of the masses.

Milestones of Comintern Leadership *

THE proletarian vanguard of the United States can justly take pride in the fact that it participated actively in the building of the Communist International, whose fifteenth anniversary falls in March of this year. At the same time, the revolutionary vanguard of this country can derive deep satisfaction from the fact that it unfailingly received brotherly advice and guidance from the Communist International in the struggle for the revolutionization of the American working class. It was from the outset, and continues to be so, a *mutual collaboration* of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries, organized in a world party, for the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the establishment of a World Soviet Republic. The leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Comintern needs neither explanation nor apology. A Party that has opened up the epoch of the world revolution, and that is successfully building a classless society on one-sixth of the earth, is cheerfully recognized and followed as the leading Party of the world Communist movement. And by the same token, the leaders of that Party—first Lenin and now Stalin—are proudly fol-

* Reprinted from *The Communist* of March, 1934.

lowed as the leaders of the proletariat and of all oppressed in every country of the world.

The bourgeoisie, and especially the social-fascist agents in the labor movement, speak of Comintern "interference" in American affairs as though the Comintern was something foreign to and outside of the working class of the United States. But that is sheer nonsense. The revolutionary vanguard of the American proletariat, organized in the Communist Party of the U.S.A., is blood of the blood and flesh of the flesh of the American working class; and it is this Party that represents the Comintern in the United States. On the other hand, the Comintern is a *world party*, and its "interference" in the affairs of its various national sections is nothing else but assistance rendered by all of these Parties *collectively* to each of them *separately*. But the social-fascists usually press the point further. It isn't, they say, so much the "interference" itself as the "dictatorial" way in which it is done. And the "Left" social-fascists (Muste & Co.), sometimes assisted and at other times led by the renegades from Communism (Lovestone and Trotsky-Cannon), push the same argument from a somewhat different angle. These—the "Left" social-fascists and the renegades—pretend to be concerned with what they call the "national" peculiarities of the American labor movement which the Comintern (so they claim) fails to take into consideration. These claims and assertions would be laughable if they were not the direct reflection of bourgeois nationalism and imperialist chauvinism with which monopoly capital is now trying to fascize its rule and prepare for war. Muste's "Americanism" and Lovestone's "exceptionalism," therefore, assume especial value for the New Dealers, the value of the most "advanced" detachments of the imperialist and chauvinist

bourgeoisie operating among the more conscious workers.

Stalin has long ago answered these laughable arguments. As to dictation from the outside, he said:

"There are no such Communists in the world who would agree to work 'under orders' from outside against their own convictions and will and contrary to the requirements of the situation. Even if there were such Communists they would not be worth a cent. Communists bravely fight against a host of enemies. The value of a Communist, among other things, lies in that he is able to defend his convictions. Therefore, it is strange to speak of American Communists as not having their own convictions and capable only of working according to 'orders' from outside. The only part of the labor leaders' assertion that has any truth in it at all is that the American Communists are affiliated to an international Communist organization and from time to time consult with the central body of this organization on one question or another."* (P. 30.)

And as to the "national" peculiarities, the refuge of every opportunist, Stalin observes:

"It would be wrong to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism. The Communist Party in its work must take them into account. But it would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party, on which it must base itself, must be the general features of capitalism, which are the same for all countries, and not its specific features in any given country. *It is on this that the internationalism of the Communist Party is founded.* Specific features are only supplementary to the general features." (Speech in the American Commission of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I., 1929.)

* Joseph Stalin, *Interview With Foreign Workers' Delegations*, New York, International Publishers, 1934.

GUIDING THE AMERICAN PARTY

We shall sketch briefly the most outstanding events in the life of the American Party where consultation with and advice from the Comintern marked off a special stage in the development of the revolutionary movement in the United States.

The bringing together of all American revolutionary workers into *one Communist Party*—to realize this historic task of the American working class with the least waste of time and energy—was the first of the more significant acts of advice of the Comintern to the revolutionary workers in the United States. Considering the historically delayed organizational break with the opportunists in the Socialist movement, on the one hand, and the heterogeneous character of the Left elements in the American labor movement out of which came the Communist Party, on the other hand, this unification was no easy or simple task. The difficulties lay in the “specific” features of American capitalism and of the labor movement. And in the years 1919-1921, the best elements of the American working class had been struggling to overcome the effects of these “specific” features and to arrive at a united and single Communist Party. If it were possible to imagine those years without a Communist International (which, of course, is impossible), these struggles for Communist unity would have been infinitely more protracted, wasteful and harmful than was actually the case. But there *was* a Communist International, led by Lenin, and, consequently, there was made available to the revolutionary workers of the United States the *world experience* and prestige of the Bolshevik movement which has gone through a long struggle with

opportunism and built up a united Communist Party. These experiences the Comintern utilized in order to help the American Communists of those years to solve their own specific problems of unity, and these problems were solved. A unified and single Communist Party was materialized in the United States in shorter time, less painfully and wastefully, than would have been the case without the advice and assistance of the Comintern. Is there a single class-conscious worker in the United States who, having familiarized himself with this event, would reproach the Comintern for "interfering" in American affairs or reproach the American Communists for accepting this "interference"? No, only Muste & Co., and the renegades, who echo the chauvinism of the Yankee imperialists, will utter such reproaches.

We come now to another milestone of Comintern leadership. This time it was the problem of breaking through *the walls of illegality* erected by the American bourgeoisie between the young Communist Party and the working class. The Communists, having been driven underground by Wilson-Palmer in 1919-1920, were struggling to find their way to the masses despite the illegality and governmental persecutions. What were the special difficulties for the solution of this problem? They arose from the danger of seeking to achieve legality by sacrificing Communist principles and hiding the revolutionary line, on the one hand, and from the danger of trying to preserve intact the Communist principles by abandoning all serious fight for legal and open work, on the other hand.

The way to the masses, the Communist Party could then find only by fighting and overcoming these Right and "Left" opportunist dangers. One of the founders of the

recently launched Muste American Workers' Party, Hardman-Salutsky, was at that time especially active in trying to switch the Communist movement to the path of buying legality by sacrificing the revolutionary line. Lacking the necessary Leninist training and experience, the American Communist Party found it extremely difficult to reach the correct solution of this task and was therefore torn between the two opportunist dangers of legalistic liquidation of the Communist Party and underground sectarianism. Once more the American Communists consulted with the Communist International. This was in 1921-1922. And the correct advice came, as it was bound to, and with its help the Workers' Party of America was organized, which opened up for the illegal Communist Party of America wide opportunities for open revolutionary work among the masses. Illegal work, that is, revolutionary mass work that could not be done openly because of governmental persecutions, was not abandoned but continued; the illegal work supplementing the legal, and vice versa.

The Party authority continued to rest in the underground Communist Party, as it should be under these conditions. And when the influence of the Communists in the Workers' Party had become firmly established, and the basic revolutionary mass work could be carried on through the Workers' Party legally, then the underground Communist Party became merged with the Workers' Party, that is, the latter became the Communist Party of the country. American Communism thus solved its immediate task and reached a higher stage in its development toward becoming the mass party of the American proletariat.

What was it that proved especially helpful for the American Communists in the Comintern advice on legal and

illegal work? It was the world and Russian experience of Bolshevism. Under Lenin's guidance the Bolsheviks had repeatedly met and solved such and similar problems and solved them successfully, as history has proved. The Bolshevik solutions, while primarily applied in Russia because there was the Party to do it, were based upon the experiences of the working class movement all over the world and thus acquired an international significance. The American Communists have been helped by the Comintern in applying these solutions to American conditions. In doing so they not only *defeated* the efforts of the bourgeoisie to strangle the revolutionary movement in the period of 1919-1921, but have also acquired knowledge and skill to defeat such efforts again, especially in the present period of sharp turn to fascism and war which inevitably brings new attacks upon the legality of the Communist Party and the working class movement as a whole. Will any sincere and militant worker in the United States, who is loyal to his class and its liberation from the misery and sufferings of capitalism, reproach the Comintern for having helped the American revolutionary workers to defeat the Wilson-Palmer persecutions? And will such a worker hold it against the American Communist Party for having accepted this helpful guidance? No, only Muste-Hardman & Co., led by the renegades, will indulge in such reproaches, because this select company is echoing the raging chauvinism of the Yankee imperialists.

The next milestone in the Comintern leadership for the American Party we find on the question of trade union work. On this, more perhaps than on any other question, the Left and militant elements in the American labor movement, in the two decades before the emergence of the Com-

intern (not to go into the pre-imperialist era), had got themselves tangled up in insoluble difficulties, torn between reformism and anarcho-syndicalism, only because they were unable, by their own efforts, to restore and further develop the revolutionary teachings of Marx and to apply them to the United States of the imperialist era. Lenin did that; but the American militants (even they) were too provincial, not enough international, because still influenced by bourgeois ideology, to find out what Leninism stands for and what it could do for the progress of the American working class. The Comintern brought the American militants and Lefts closer to the world labor movement and to the basic problems of the American labor movement. The trade union question was one of them. The young American Communist movement struggled painfully to throw off the ballast of Gompers-Hillquit reformism and DeLeon-I.W.W. sectarianism, sometimes falling victim to the former, at other times to the latter, and occasionally to both. Even the best and most experienced among the Left and militant leaders of the American workers, the builders and founders of the revolutionary movement of the American workers in the imperialist era, such as the late Charles E. Ruthenberg, as well as the present leader of our Party, William Z. Foster, were able to rid themselves and our movement of the old ballast of opportunism only by coming closer to Leninism and into the Comintern. By becoming *more international*, the proletarian vanguard in the United States has become also *more American*, because the international experience, as it is incorporated in Leninism and in Comintern guidance, helped the American Communists to come closer to the basic masses of the American proletariat and to begin

to function as the leaders of its struggles against American capitalism.

It was Comintern advice and guidance that helped the American Communists to turn full face to the building of a Left Wing in the reformist unions beginning with 1920; it was the advice of the Comintern that helped formulate a correct solution to one of the basic problems of the American proletariat—the organization of the unorganized into trade unions; it was advice of the Comintern on independent leadership of the economic struggles by the revolutionary elements that helped formulate strike policies and tactics; it was Comintern advice on how to revolutionize the labor movement, through organization and leadership of the daily struggles of the masses and systematic exposure and struggle against the reformists, that helped the American Communists to prove to wide masses of workers and toilers that the C.P.U.S.A. is the only true proletarian party in the United States and the leader of all exploited. In short, at every stage in the development of the revolutionary trade union movement in the United States (Trade Union Educational League, class struggle unions of the Trade Union Unity League, the application of the united front on the trade union field, the fight for trade union unity, etc.), it was with the help of the Comintern that the American revolutionary workers were able to find the correct way, to correct their errors and, through manifold changes in tactics, to press on to the goal of building a revolutionary trade union movement in the United States.

Comintern influence on the development of revolutionary trade union policies in the United States has especial significance. Here, as in other capitalist countries, the imperialist bourgeoisie, with the help of the reformists, suc-

ceeded in *splitting the working class*, setting the small minority of "labor aristocrats" against the basic mass of the proletariat. Following out this policy, the reformist trade union bureaucracy was persistently shutting out of trade union organization the bulk of the American proletariat, especially its most oppressed and exploited sections. This it was that constituted and still constitutes one of the chief weaknesses of the American working class. And the most damning indictment against the A. F. of L. bureaucracy is its discrimination and exclusion of the Negro proletariat.

It is significant, therefore, that the first question which Comrade Stalin put to the American trade union delegation was: "How do you account for the small percentage of American workers organized in trade unions?" And he added: "I would like to ask the delegation whether it regards this small percentage of organized workers as a good thing. Does not the delegation think that this small percentage is an indication of the weakness of the American proletariat and of the weakness of its weapon in the struggle against the capitalists in the economic field?"

That was in 1927. Lack of space does not permit to deal here with the answer of the delegation. Suffice it to say that this delegation, made up as it was of so-called progressives, really bourgeois liberals, was in its answers, at best, very helpless and confused. But the intent of Stalin's question is clear: Why don't you organize the workers in trade unions? Why don't you strengthen them against the capitalists? And it was in this direction that the Comintern threw the full weight of its influence and advice in the American labor movement. Organize the basic sections of the proletariat into unions, liberate the existing mass trade

unions from the stranglehold of the reformists, and unify the trade union movement of this country—this was the nature of Comintern guidance to the revolutionary workers in the United States.

Tactics and methods of work may vary, depending upon the state of the class struggle. In the light of recent events, the Communist Party favors the organization of independent unions *in those cases* where such a measure would constitute a *step in advance* toward the revolutionization of the trade union movement. But the strategic aim always remained the same, and for this aim the Communist Party fights bravely and persistently and with increasing effectiveness. The general crisis of capitalism, undermining the basis of existence of large numbers of the "labor aristocracy" as well as the working class as a whole, creates ever more favorable conditions for the realization of this aim. So, we ask again: can any American worker, who is alive to the needs of his class and is willing to fight for them, find anything to object to in this "interference" of the Communist International in American affairs? And will he object to the Communist Party of the United States accepting and taking deep satisfaction in such "interference"? No, he will not. Only Muste and Co., abetted by the renegades, will object and will call it "outside dictation," because these groups echo the mad chauvinism of the Yankee imperialists.

We shall now relate another significant instance of Comintern leadership in the United States. In the years 1921-1924, one of the important phases of the American labor movement was a widespread urge for the organization of a Labor Party. The Left Wing in the Socialist Party and the first Communist Party convention took a completely

negative attitude toward it. But in their struggle to establish contact with the masses and with their movements against capitalism and its major political parties, the American Communists came to adopt the position of active participation in the Labor Party movement. The aim of this position was to accelerate the existing break-away movement of the workers and toiling farmers from the capitalist parties and to direct this movement along the channels of independent working class political action. Comintern influence and advice strengthened the American Communists in this determination, thus helping to overcome the various sectarian objections to such a policy.

But it also did something else; it tried to guard the American Communists against some of the reformist dangers, for instance, the danger of forcing the organization of a Labor Party before there was a sound proletarian mass basis laid for it; or the danger of the Labor Party movement becoming a tail end to the petty-bourgeois Farmer-Labor movements with the inevitable submerging of the workers and the young Communist Party into this petty-bourgeois outfit controlled by bourgeois politicians. The Comintern advise was: Beat back your sectarian tendencies, participate actively in the Labor Party movement, build unceasingly your own proletarian base and the proletarian mass base for the Labor Party, especially by building the revolutionary trade union movement, and fight against all Right opportunist tendencies to submerge the workers in petty-bourgeois movements.

Unfortunately this advice was not always followed, with the result that the Communist Party itself began to flirt with the petty-bourgeois Farmer-Labor Party and with the late LaFollette (1923-1924). If continued, such flirtation

might have become highly dangerous for the cause of working class independent political action and for the Communist Party. Again Comintern advice was thrown in to straighten out the Party's line, and at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern the American experiences were evaluated afresh. This was done in the light of the general analysis of the world (and American) situation, which showed the weakening of the relative stabilization of capitalism, the approach of a new and sharper phase of its general crisis, and the consequent growing radicalization of the masses. This was in 1928. And the Congress said to the American Communists: "Concentrate on the work in the trade unions, on organizing the unorganized, etc., and in this way lay the basis for the practical realization of the slogan of a broad Labor Party, organized from below."

No wonder Muste, Hardman-Salutsky and Co. do not like Comintern "interference," because it helps to expose, and cuts straight across, the reformist machinations of this "Left" social-fascist outfit. In 1922, the Communist Party was forced to expel from its ranks the same Hardman-Salutsky because he was working hand in glove with the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and the Farmer-Labor Party politicians *against the organization of a Labor Party* and against the Labor Party policies of the Communist Party of which he was then a member. Now, when the Communist Party concentrates on building the firm proletarian base (in the unions and in the shops and among the unemployed) upon which alone, as experience has shown, a broad Labor Party organized from below can come into existence without the danger of its becoming the tail end of reformist and bourgeois Farmer-Labor politicians, the same Salutsky-Hardman, this time in company with Muste, proceeds

again to collaborate with the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and the Farmer-Labor politicians to oppose the line of the Communist Party. Only now, having "learned" from experience, he and Muste are using the very Labor Party slogan for this purpose, for the purpose of obstructing the radicalization of the masses and of steering this radicalization into Farmer-Labor channels. The Comintern has helped the Amercian workers and their Communist Party to expose and fight against this and similar "Left" maneuvers of the reformists; it has helped and is helping to build organized proletarian strength and to unite this strength with the exploited toiling farmers under working class leadership.

With Leninism as its guide, the Communist Party of the United States is fighting for the organization of the *alliance* between the workers, toiling farmers, and Negroes under the *hegemony of the proletariat*, concentrating on developing the working class, politically and organizationally, as the true leader of this alliance. Can the American class-conscious workers and militant toiling farmers reproach the Comintern for thus guiding the American Communists and the struggling masses of the United States? Can they object to the American Communists accepting and following out this advice? No, they cannot and do not. Only Muste, Hardman and Co. raise such objections and this they do because the Yankee imperialists do it.

We come to a milestone of Comintern leadership in the United States that has been especially fruitful in making the fight for proletarian internationalism alive and real in projecting the liberating mission of the American proletariat in a most concrete and telling manner. We refer here to the Communist program for *Negro liberation*. It was

no accident that this was the problem—the Negro problem in the United States—that it took the revolutionary workers of America *the longest*, in point of time, to become aware of and to find a solution for. Bourgeois ideology, the “white prejudices” of the old slave market, had poisoned the minds, not alone of the backward strata of the toilers, but also the most advanced sections. And thus we find that the Left Wing of the Socialist Party which formed the Communist Party somehow “overlooked” the national-revolutionary significance of the Negro liberation struggles. And even when the American Communists had finally begun to grapple with the Negro question in a Leninist way, starting practical mass work to organize the white and Negro toilers to struggle for Negro rights, there still was considerable hesitation and confusion among the weaker elements of the Communist movement to project boldly the full Leninist solution of the problem.

Once more came the “outside” influence of the Comintern; and what did it say? It said that the struggle against discrimination and for Negro rights is a revolutionary struggle for the national liberation of the Negroes, that we must fight for complete Negro equality, and that in the Black Belt the full realization of this demand requires the fight for the national self-determination of the Negroes including the right of separation from the United States and the organization of an independent state. Furthermore, it was the interpretation of Leninism and its application to the United States as made by the Comintern that showed the American Communists that the agrarian revolution in the Black Belt, where the Negro masses are mostly peasants and semi-serfs, is the basis of the national-liberation movement and that this movement is one of the allies of the American

proletariat in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Lovestone renegades advocate the bourgeois theory that capitalist development itself, the "industrialization of the South," will solve the Negro question. The Communist Party—following the lead of the Comintern—says that only the national-revolutionary movement of the Negroes, as an organic part and ally of the proletarian revolution, will solve the Negro question. From this point of view, the American Communists are able to expose the Muste-Hardman position on this question as bourgeois liberalism in words and Yankee white chauvinism in deeds.

Will the Negro workers, farmers, and city poor consider the Comintern advice on the Negro question as "outside dictation"? No. They will, as they actually do, receive this advice with outstretched arms and will continue in ever larger masses to rally around the Communist Party as the leader of the liberation fight. And will the white workers, those belonging to the dominating nationality in the United States but who are already awake to their true interests, will they perhaps resent this advice as "outside dictation"? No. Some of these class-conscious white workers may still hesitate because they are as yet not completely free from the bourgeois curse of white chauvinism, but none of them will say that this advice is not in the best interests of the American working class and of all exploited.

Let us now cast just a glance (space does not permit more than that) at still another "dictation" from the Comintern—the advice to the American Communists and to the revolutionary trade union movement to make demands for *unemployment insurance* one of the major issues of the class struggle. Not that the American Communists were not aware of the importance of this demand, but (for a time)

they had not managed, for various reasons, to project this demand into the mass struggles in a really effective way. The Comintern began to stress this issue long before the outbreak of the economic crisis with its 17,000,000 fully unemployed. Seeing the permanent unemployed army of over 4,000,000 workers in the years of "prosperity," and foreseeing the end of relative capitalist stabilization which would catastrophically increase unemployment, as it did, the Comintern undertook to prepare the proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party, and through it the whole working class for effective struggle against unemployment.

The Communist Party, guided by the Comintern, eventually succeeded in making this demand, together with the demand for immediate relief to the unemployed, a major issue in the class struggle of the United States. And it is indisputable that whatever relief was "granted" to the workers, through governmental agencies and otherwise, was a result mainly of the struggles initiated by the Communist Party and the revolutionary trade union movement. Furthermore, these struggles had a powerful revolutionizing effect upon wide masses of workers. Will the unemployed American workers, who know these facts, as well as the class-conscious employed workers, resent this "interference" of the Comintern in American affairs? No, they will not; they will say: if this is what Comintern leadership means, we are all for it, despite the chauvinistic "Americanisms" of the Right and "Left" social-fascists and their renegade companions.

And lastly—the *liquidation of the factional situation* in the Communist Party. It is on this, more than anything else, that the Muste-Hardman outfit, led by the Lovestone renegades and the Trotskyist counter-revolutionaries, choose to

illustrate the "outside dictation" and interference of the Communist International. Well, the facts speak for themselves. By the early summer of 1919, the factional cancer that had been spreading to the vitals of the Communist Party for many years was beginning to threaten the most serious consequences. A break-up of the Party into various pieces with some of them getting switched into the channels of "Left" reformism, others getting tangled up in some hopeless sectarian nooks, while still others being caught in the nets of Trotskyism, seemed almost inevitable, if a quick and radical end was not made to the factional situation. And remember: these were the dangers confronting the Communist Party at the very threshold of the economic crisis, that is, at the time when the American working class needed and was going to need this Party more than ever in the history of the American class struggle.

But this disaster *did not happen*. And why? Because the Comintern spoke to the American Party with authority and wisdom; in so speaking, in pointing out the dangers and the way to avoid them, the Comintern *released the initiative and creative activity* of the overwhelming majority of the Party, the initiative that had become paralyzed during the years of factional fight; and on the basis of this initiative of the Party membership, with the help of this power, the Party was able to cleanse itself of the hopelessly factional elements and of the Right and "Left" opportunist groupings that went with the factions and thus laid the basis for the subsequent unification of the Party and its fresh start on the field of revolutionary mass work.

The Comintern did "interfere"; there can be no doubt of that. And it is fortunate that it did. And if you wish to know what precisely it was that fired the imagination and

enthusiasm of the membership and sympathizers of the Communist Party of the United States to endorse and follow out the advice of the Comintern in making an end to factionalism and in cleansing itself of the Lovestone opportunists and the conciliators, read once more Stalin's speeches on the question. We must quote at least this:

"I think, comrades, that the American Communist Party is one of those few Communist Parties in the world upon which history had laid tasks of a decisive character from the point of view of the world revolutionary movement. You all know very well the strength and power of American imperialism. Many now think [that was spoken in May, 1929] that the general crisis of world capitalism will not affect America. That, of course, is not true. It is entirely untrue, comrades. The crisis of world capitalism is developing with increasing rapidity and cannot but affect American capitalism. The 3,000,000 now unemployed in America are the first swallows indicating the ripening of the economic crisis in America. The sharpening antagonisms between America and England, the struggle for markets and raw materials and, finally, the colossal growth of armaments—that is the second portent of the approaching crisis. I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America. And when a revolutionary crisis develops in America, that will be the beginning of the end of world capitalism as a whole. It is essential that the American Communist Party should be capable of meeting that historical moment fully prepared and of assuming the leadership of the impending class struggle in America. Every effort and every means must be employed in preparing for that, comrades. For that end the American Communist Party must be improved and Bolshevikized. For that end we must work for the complete liquidation of factionalism and deviations in the Party. For that end we must work for the re-establishment of unity in the Communist Party of America. For that end we must work in order to forge real revolutionary cadres and a real revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, capable of leading the many millions of the American working class toward the revolutionary class struggle.

For that end all personal factors and factional considerations must be laid aside and the revolutionary education of the working class of America be placed above all."

PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM AS AGAINST IMPERIALIST CHAUVINISM

For the class-conscious American workers, but especially for its younger generation, there is great significance in the fact that the two militant working class fighters in the labor movement of the United States in this country—the imperialist era—the two men who represent most fully the best and most advanced achievements of the American working class, Ruthenberg and Foster, that both of these became the builders of the Communist Party, the builders and followers of the Communist International.

Ruthenberg we have lost altogether too soon; March 2 of this year marks the seventh anniversary of his death; but the value of his work in founding our Party, in pointing the way to the Communist International for other thousands of workers, and in guiding our movement for many years, this will never be lost. Now our movement has Foster as the leader. And while he is temporarily disabled by terrific exertion in the class struggle, Comrade Foster's power of attraction to our Party, the power that has brought and will continue to bring into our ranks and to the Comintern all that is militant, honest and creative in the American working class, this power has never weakened but is growing stronger with the sharpening of the class struggles.

Ruthenberg and Foster came to the Communist International because in the proletarian internationalism of Lenin's teachings, which guide the Comintern work, both

had found the solution of all those problems and tasks that confronted them and the American working class in the present epoch. Ruthenberg's experiences had been acquired in the Socialist Party, chiefly on the political field; Foster's, on the other hand, were acquired mainly on the trade union field. The revolutionary instinct and consciousness of Ruthenberg could not but rebel against the narrow parliamentary limitations of Socialist Party politics; while the revolutionary consciousness of Foster, and the logic of the great economic struggles which he had organized and led, could not but make him rebel against the narrow "economism" of Gompers as well as of anarcho-syndicalism. Both, Ruthenberg and Foster, were therefore led to Leninism and its conception of a "new type" of Party as the only ideology that offered a revolutionary and proletarian solution for their problems. And these were the problems of the American working class and its revolutionary vanguard.

The coming together of these two revolutionists and their followers into one working class Party marked a historic event of the first magnitude. The meaning of this event was that, for the first time in the history of the American working class, there came to an end the traditional separation between the advanced revolutionary elements of the trade unions, on the one hand, and the revolutionary elements of the Socialist (political-parliamentary) Party, on the other. This traditional separation was perhaps the largest single factor that had retarded, in the past, the coming into life in the United States of a proletarian revolutionary Party of the Leninist kind. Ruthenberg and Foster started the process of liquidating this separation by coming together in the building of the Communist Party in the United States. To this they came by the inexorable logic

of the class struggle in the United States and the point at which they met and joined hands was *Leninism and the Communist International*.

In the fifteen years of its existence the Comintern has grown into a true world party. It has reached the high stage where all "Communist Parties are carrying out one single line of the Comintern," a stage where all "Communist Parties are united by the Executive Committee of the Communist International into a single centralized World Party which the Second International never had and never will have." (Piatnitsky, *Speech at the Thirteenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I.*) In this lies the main strength of the world revolution and the guarantee of its inevitable victory. It is this that makes possible, for the first time in the history of the world, the effective carrying out of a *world revolutionary strategy*, the only road to victory over capitalism. And it is in Comrade Stalin, since Lenin's death, that this strategy has found the greatest formulator, interpreter, and organizer. With the deepest pride in this achievement, the class-conscious workers of the United States, the militant farmers and revolutionary Negroes, will celebrate the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Comintern. It is with the same feeling of pride that they realize that they belong to a world party together with the glorious Party of the Soviet Union; that they belong to a world party which is daily guided by such proved leaders as Manuilsky, Kuusinen, Thaelmann and Piatnitsky; and that by building the revolutionary movement in the United States we are also building the world power of the proletariat for the victory of the world revolution.

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